

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY J C SQUIRE

HORACE WALPOLE



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HORACE WALPOLE

BY

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PREFACE

SINCE Austin Dobson's graceful monograph on Horace Walpole appeared in the year 1893, the successive volumes and supplements of the Paget Toynbee edition of the *Letters* have placed within the reach of the would-be biographer an enormous mass of new material

Eliot Warburton, who produced two tomes of ponderous and discursive *Memoirs* in 1852, was handicapped by the comparative meagreness of the then-available Walpole *dossier*, and even Dobson was compelled to use the inaccurate and incomplete Cunningham edition of the *Letters*. To Warburton, his subject was interesting rather as a man of fashion and a politician than as a *littérateur*, and neither in Dobson's study, nor in Seeley's of four years earlier, was there any attempt—or any desire—to concentrate upon Walpole's literary activities. In *Horace Walpole's World* (1913) Miss Alice Greenwood, as her sub-title indicates, has traced *A Sketch of Whig Society under George III.*, and in his monumental *Vie d'un Dilettante* M. Paul Yvon has conceded only one out of six *Livres* to *Walpole auteur*. On the other hand, it is as a versifier only that he estimates him in another, and much smaller, book; and Mr J. H. Edge, K C.,

considers only "the Great Letter-Writer" in the lively paper read by him before a Dublin literary society in 1913. From these facts emerges the astonishing realisation that no single book has yet been dedicated to a critical appreciation of Horace Walpole as a man of letters.

This does not mean that "Horry" has been suffering from neglect. Distinguished critics have dealt with him of late years in no grudging manner, though always either in detached essays, or in subsections of works on the Augustan age or on the letter-writer's craft. In that craft his supremacy has never been more widely acknowledged, and there is also a general recognition of the importance of *The Castle of Otranto*, though in this case the interest may be extrinsic rather than inherent in "the thing itself". What has been lacking is a study of Walpole in his literary character, a survey and a *critique raisonnée* of the whole *corpus* of his available writings in verse and prose.

Some of his early political satires, such as the anti-Bath skit which I have unearthed from *Old England or the Constitutional Journal*, are of the true "Horatian" quality, but all have been left unsummarised and unquoted till now. Even his essays in the *Museum* and the *World* have been passed somewhat too lightly by, and nobody seems to have taken the trouble to ascertain whether he had, or had not, great cause to blush for *Richard Whiteliver*. The reluctance of his critics to grapple with the *Mysterious Mother* is rather more excusable.

In my closing pages I have deliberately rejected Joseph Farington's evidence regarding Walpole's last

moments in favour of Miss Berry's Farington writes that he died "*with* apparent pain", but I believe that his pen slipped, and that the preposition should have been "*without*"

My very grateful thanks are due to Professor Saintsbury, Dr Paget Toynbee, and Mr J. C Squire, for their kindness in placing at my disposal books, documents, and information to which I should otherwise have gained access only with difficulty, if at all, and to the Rev Father Hastings, Principal of St Mary's Training College, Twickenham, for most courteously throwing open to me the portals of Walpole's "plaything house", and of his almost unaltered gardens, at Strawberry Hill.

D. M. S

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CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS—ETON AND CAMBRIDGE

THE fourth son and youngest child of Sir Robert Walpole and Catherine his wife was born on September 24, 1717 (N S) in a high, brick-built house on the Green Park side of Arlington Street, Piccadilly. Three sons and two daughters had already been born of the marriage between the great Whig statesman and the well-favoured grand-daughter of Sir John Shorter, importer of Baltic timber and one-time Lord Mayor of London. The third son, Edward, was eleven years old when the fourth, Horace, appeared upon the scene.

In the previous April, Sir Robert, as the result of a split in his party, and to mark his dissent from the belligerent anti-Swedish policy of George I, had tendered his resignation to that disconcerted monarch, by whom the seals of office were replaced no less than ten times in the retiring minister's hat. The royal reluctance availed nothing. Sir Robert knew that his eclipse could not be of long duration, and his "partiality to the *solum natale*", noted by Hicvey, probably made him well-pleased to win a little leisure for fox-hunting, tree-planting, and jovial company on

those Norfolk estates which had been held by his family since the reign of King John

In this biography it is neither necessary to consider at length, nor possible to pass by in silence, the rumour, set afloat by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and revived by her grand-daughter, Lady Louisa Stuart, to the effect that Sir Robert was not the father of the fragile, dark-eyed elf of a child born at his London house in 1717, and baptized Horatio, after the slovenly, boorish, but not unintelligent Horatio Walpole of Wolterton Lady Mary, the admiring friend and ally of Maria Skerrett, the statesman's *maîtresse en chef*, was the last woman in the world to be over-sensitive about the reputation of the lawful wife, more especially as the

lively eyes and rosy hue
Of Robin's face

seem to have made a dint upon her own impressionable heart "when Robin first she knew" Good easy man though Sir Robert may have been, and abundant cause though he may have given Lady Walpole for jealousy, it is hardly conceivable that he would have requested his brother Horatio, and his sister, Dorothy, Lady Townshend, to stand sponsors for a child of whom he suspected the actual father to be Carr, Lord Hervey, the elder brother of Pope's Sporus Moreover, though facial resemblances are not admissible as evidence in a court of law, and though they are usually inconclusive and often illusory, it is at least worthy of mention that between Eckhardt's portrait of Lady Mary Churchill, Sir Robert's daughter by Maria Skerrett, and the portraits of Horace Walpole by Hone and by Rosalba there is a distinct and unmistakable affinity of feature and expression Whatever the truth may have

been, it is in the highest degree improbable that the Wortley Montagu legend ever reached Horace Walpole's ears. Devotion to his mother's memory was one of the most enduring sentiments of his long life, and, even in a cynical age, his ostentatious loyalty to Sir Robert, his implacable wrath against his foes, his glorification of the Walpole lineage in the carved and painted heraldry of his Gothic villa, would surely, had the legend been widely known and generally credited, have evoked so much ironical laughter that the reverberations would be audible even now.

Beyond doubt Lady Walpole's last-born child was her favourite, and bore the impress of her personality more distinctly than any of the others. In the inscription which he composed for her monument in Henry the Seventh's Chapel he declared that she had "Beauty and Wit without Vice or Vanity and cultivated the arts without affectation". Indeed, she seems to have possessed both the will and the power to please, and to have been endowed with good looks, good humour, and a somewhat robust sense of the ridiculous. It may well be that Horace inherited from her both his garden-planning and his curio-collecting tendencies. She had a "grotto of exotics" at Chelsea, and in the dressing-room at Houghton there stood, years after her death, a glass case enshrining "a large collection of silver Pheligræ" which had been hers.

Gloomy prophets, gazing upon the infant Horace, assured Lady Walpole with profound conviction, "That child cannot possibly live". Such predictions served only to intensify her love for the engaging, precocious little boy. "Compassion and tenderness", he lived to write many years later, "soon became

extreme fondness, and as the infinite good nature of my father never thwarted any of his children, he suffered me to be too much indulged " For the greater part of Horace's childhood that infinitely good-natured but not remarkably attentive parent was pre-occupied with affairs of state, with political—and other—intrigues. His frequent absences, his sojourns with Miss Skerrett at Houghton or at his thatched hunting-lodge in Richmond Park, left him little leisure to bestow upon his wife, and little interest to bestow upon her favourite child.

In 1721, when trade was paralysed and national credit tottering as the result of the South Sea scandal, the Whigs returned to power, and Sir Robert entered upon a term of office destined to last for twenty years, and to end only with his downfall. The prudent sale of his own South Sea shares, when such stock was at the top of the market and brought him a neat profit of a thousand per cent, enabled him to set about building at Houghton that vast Italianate palace which took thirteen years to complete, and which Hervey, on account of the jealousy which it aroused in the breast of Sir Robert's neighbour and brother-in-law, Lord Townshend, called "this fabric of fraternal discord".

George I had observed of his greatest minister that he turned stones into gold That process was reversed in 1722, when Ripley the architect began to pile up masses of tawny-hued Whitby stone upon the defenceless soil of Norfolk Before the grandiose scheme was more than three parts executed, it became obvious that its execution would ruin its creator. In 1731 Pope's shrill voice was heard, demanding·

What brought Sir Visto's ill-got wealth to waste?

and immediately explaining that

Some demon whispered, "Visto! have a taste!"
Heaven visits with a taste the wealthy fool,
And needs no rod but Ripley with a rule

In the same year the Walpoles moved into that "house next the college at Chelsea" where they were visited by Voltaire, and where little Horace had a fleeting, long-remembered glimpse of the once-lovely Frances Jennings, Duchess of Tyrconnel, and heard her praise the beauty of the prospect when her dim eyes were actually looking forth upon the garden wall. Three years later Lady Walpole decided that her youngest son was now sufficiently robust to be sent to share with his Townshend cousins, first at Bexley and later at Twickenham, the instructions of their tutor Edward Weston, son of Stephen Weston, Bishop of Exeter. From Bexley he despatched to her the first letters traced by his inexpert quill. These are very shakily written, and even more shakily spelt, and the earliest of all gives evidence of that love for pet animals which was later to find expression in a veritable menagerie of cats, dogs, goldfish, squirrels, and perroquets at Strawberry Hill. "I am glad", remarks the small boy in a postscript, "to hear by Tom that all my cruatuars are all wall." In another Bexley epistle he says that he wants "the Yearl of Assax and Jan Shor"—presumably the plays by John Banks and Nicholas Rowe dealing with those ill-starred victims of royal caprice—and his concluding request that "Mr Jankins", Sir Robert's steward, should send him "som more paper" suggests that he himself "commenced author" at the early age of eight. It is evident from the signatures attached to these childish

missives that the English form of the boy's Christian name, as distinct from the one bestowed upon him by his godfathers and godmothers in his baptism, was adopted betimes, though on the book-plate which he used at Eton in 1733, and on the title-page of his posthumous *Works*, he appears as "Horatio". To Pinkerton he observed, in his old age, "The name *Horatio* I dislike It is theatrical, and not English I have, ever since I was a youth, written and subscribed *Horace*, an English name for an Englishman "

In April 1727 the Prime Minister's youngest son entered Eton, his father's old school, where Sir Robert had mastered just as much Latin as afterwards enabled him to converse haltingly though energetically with a King of England who had no English Like the most illustrious of his contemporaries, Thomas Gray, Horace Walpole was an oppidan, not a collegier, and thus escaped the harshest rigours of scholastic discipline. From a distance his perturbed mother tried to watch over his still precarious health, sending him fearful concoctions mixed by her own hands We find him writing somewhat ruefully to his "dearest, dear Mama" from school, "I was in hopes I had finish'd my Physick, but since my dear Mama desires it, to be sure I will take it again".

It must have been during his first holidays from Eton that the famous interview took place between the nine-year-old Horace and King George I The great Whig families of that period professed—and may have felt—for the Hanoverian dynasty a devotion almost as perfervid as that of the Jacobites for the House of Stuart, though rather less comprehensible. This

loyal enthusiasm seems to have penetrated even to the servants' hall at Chelsea, for Horace Walpole afterwards attributed to the influence of his mother's waiting-women the strong desire which seized him, in the early summer of 1727, to behold with his own eyes the person of his sovereign lord the King. So earnestly did he importune his mother to that effect, she sought and obtained permission through the Duchess of Kendal (*alias* Madame Schulemberg) for the small boy to be received in private audience by his Majesty at St. James's Palace. The "elderly man, not tall, of an aspect rather good than august, with a dark tie-wig and a plain coat, waistcoat and breeches of snuff-coloured cloth", whom he there beheld, left England the next day for Hanover, whence he was fated never to return. Later, that small boy, walking in procession with his fellow-Etonians to hear George II proclaimed king, paid to the memory of the dead monarch the startling tribute of a sudden burst of tears.

Horace Walpole's tutor at Eton was the son of the headmaster of the day, Dr. Bland. Keenly sensible of the honour which would accrue to him if he made a brilliant scholar of the Prime Minister's son, Mr. Henry Bland demanded from his pupil exertions which the boy himself considered excessive.

"I remember", Walpole wrote to his cousin, Henry Seymour Conway, in after years, "when I was at Eton and Mr. Bland had set me some extraordinary task, I used sometimes to pique myself on not getting it, because it was not immediately school-business. What! learn more than I was absolutely forced to learn! I felt the weight of learning that, for I was a blockhead, and pushed up above my parts."

At no time of his life is it conceivable that Horace Walpole either *was* a blockhead or unfeignedly believed himself to *be* one. If he disappointed the brighter expectations of Mr Henry Bland, it was rather from want of application than from lack of natural ability. Drudgery did not appeal to him. And he soon found a pleasant counterpoise to "school-business" in the society of a group of boys as quaintly unboyish as himself, Thomas Gray, Thomas Ashton, and Richard West. These constituted the inner circle of his Eton acquaintance, and it was with them that he formed the "Quadruple Alliance" of his early letters. With two more strenuous and robust boys, George Montagu and Charles Lyttleton, he formed a Triumvirate of which he retained happy recollections when he had left Eton for Cambridge. Other contemporaries were his Conway cousins, Charles Hanbury (Williams), and George Augustus Selwyn. To yet another school-fellow, William Cole, the son of a Fenland farmer, may belong the credit of having turned Walpole's attention to mediæval archæology, for this unaccountable youth loved to spend his half-holidays copying heraldic devices and black-letter epitaphs in country churchyards. Charles Lyttleton, also, may have evinced betimes those tastes which led him finally to the episcopal throne of Carlisle and the presidential chair of the Society of Antiquaries.

With all these boys Walpole had ties of sympathy, but with none was he upon terms of such close and happy friendship as he was with Ashton, West and Gray. Together the four devoured the novels of *Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, the plays of Dryden, and an unconscionable amount of romantic and pastoral

poetry, both French and English, most of it belonging to the tinsel and stucco school. We can readily believe Walpole's own assertion that he was "never quite a school-boy." It would indeed be difficult to imagine him joining in an expedition against pugilistic bargemen, and "to chase the rolling circle's speed and urge the flying ball" would probably have given him little delight. In Gray and West his receptive intelligence and his somewhat fantastic mentality met their perfect complement. Gray was a precocious boy, perhaps a trifle top-heavy, and prone already to the surging fluctuations of mood inseparable from the truly poetic temperament. About West, delicate, sensitive, unusually gifted, there was more than a touch of the "ineffectual angel", though, happily for his friends and for himself, he had not Shelley's sustained and disconcerting seriousness of mind. Ashton does not seem to fit quite harmoniously into the group. His wit, like his person, was ungainly, and the nickname of "Almanzor", bestowed upon him by his three companions, suggests that they perceived more than one point of similarity between him and the bombastic, arrogant hero of *The Conquest of Granada*. It seems not impossible that a very unattractive streak of personal ambition may have prompted Ashton to push his way into the little circle in which the central figure was the Prime Minister's son. He certainly owed later to Walpole's good offices the post of tutor to Lord Plymouth's heir, which he obtained on leaving Cambridge, the Crown living of Aldingham, and also the Fellowship of Eton to which he was appointed in 1745. When, five years after that appointment was made, a rupture took place, Walpole wrote to Mann

I believe you have often heard me mention a Mr Ashton, a clergyman, who, in one word, has great preferments and owes everything upon earth to me. I have long had reason to complain of his behaviour, in short, my father is dead, and I can make no more bishops.

So much for Almanzor Gray, the most highly gifted member of the Quadruple Alliance, was dubbed "Orozmades" (*i.e.* Oromazdes, the First Person of the Zoroastrian Trinity) in allusion to his *frileux* habit of body. There is some uncertainty as to the origin of Walpole's own sobriquet of "Celadon." Dr Paget Toynbee, who in *The Correspondence of Gray, Walpole, West, and Ashton* has finally solved the problem of the right allocation of the four nicknames, cites the Celadon in Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée* and also him in Thomson's "Summer" as possible originals. Very diffidently the present writer would suggest a third alternative, that is, the witty, flighty, fantastic shepherd in Dryden's *Secret Love or the Maiden Queen*. Dryden seems to have been a favourite with the Quadruple Alliance—and he was Lady Walpole's great-uncle into the bargain. Concerning the source of West's *alias* we are left in no doubt; his friends called him "Zephyrus" or "Favonius", the West Wind. By all three it appears that he was regarded with something of that half-playful, half-wistful affection which people of maturer years often concentrate upon children more charming than robust.

Despite the hopeful and unremitting activities of Mr Henry Bland, Horace Walpole's years at Eton were singularly happy, and no Etonian ever cherished for his old school a more whimsically fervent love. "Gray is at Burnham", he wrote to West from Cam-

bridge in 1736, "and, what is surprising, has not been at Eton Could you live so near it without seeing it?" And writing to George Montagu a few months later he exclaims.

DEAR GEORGE—Were not the playing-fields of Eton food for all manner of flights? No old maid's gown, though it had been tormented into all the fashions from King James to King George, ever underwent so many transformations as those plains have in my idea At first I was contented with tending a visionary flock, and sighing some pastoral name to the echo of the cascade under the bridge As I got further into Virgil and Clelia, I found myself transported from Arcadia to the garden of Italy, and saw Windsor Castle in no other view than the *capitol immobile saxum*

Revisiting Eton ten years later, he sent a letter from the Christopher Inn to the same correspondent, a letter sprinkled with Etonian slang and enriched by an example of that rare knack, possessed by none of his contemporaries (except, perhaps, Smollett), of suggesting backgrounds and interiors in a few brief but vivid phrases

Here I am, like Noah just returned to his old world again, with all sorts of queer feels about me By the way, the clock strikes the old cracked sound I recollect so much, and remember so little—and want to play about—and am so afraid of my playfellows—and am ready to shirk Ashton—and can't help making fun of myself—and envy a dame over the way, that has just locked in her boarders, and is going to sit down in a little hot parlour to a very bad supper, so comfortably! In short, I should be out of all bounds if I was to tell you half I feel, how young again I am in one minute, and how old the next

The group of unboyish boys which had sauntered so happily under the shadow of the *capitol immobile saxum*, while their more strenuous contemporaries

amused themselves "thumping and pummelling King Amulius's herdsmen", began to disperse in 1733, when Almanzor was elected to King's College, Cambridge. Orozmales went into residence at Peterhouse in October 1734, and Celadon, after a brief interval, entered his father's old college, King's, in March 1735. Two months later Favonius, who would fain have followed his friends, matriculated with reluctance at Christ Church, Oxford.

In the *Short Notes of My Life*, written for the enlightenment of the editor of his posthumously collected works, Walpole acknowledges that his residence at the University was intermittent. He says that he "continued" there, "though with long intervals, till towards the end of 1738". As early as 1731, when he was still at Eton, he had been entered at Lincoln's Inn by Sir Robert, who intended him to keep his terms in due course, but in the event he "never went there, not caring for the profession".

Young Mr. Walpole does not seem to have found the air of Cambridge very easy to breathe. Only the presence of Gray and Ashton, his Conway cousins and William Cole, made it endurable to him. With fellow-undergraduates whose principal diversions were badger-baiting and cock-fighting, and among whom he and Gray were almost alone in preferring tea to beer as a breakfast beverage, he could never have found much in common. Writing to West in 1735 he alludes to Oxford and Cambridge as "two barbarous towns o'er-run with rusticity and mathematics", and to George Montagu he unburdens himself in this strain:

I have been so used to the delicate food of PARNASSUS, that I can never condescend to apply to the grosser studies

of the Alma Mater Sober cloth of syllogism colour suits me ill, or, what's worse, I hate clothes that one must prove to be of no colour at all I am not against cultivating these studies, as they are certainly useful, but then they quite neglect all polite literature, all knowledge of this world

There we catch the authentic accents of Mr Walpole of King's Polite literature, knowledge of this world, are they not more profitable, as well as more pleasant, than a whole universe of syllogisms ?

In the *Short Notes* we are told .

My public tutor was Mr John Smith, my private, Mr Anstey, afterwards Mr John Whaley was my tutor I went to lectures in Civil law to Dr Dickens of Trinity Hall, to mathematical lectures to blind Professor Sanderson for a short time, afterwards Mr Trevigar read lectures to me in mathematics and philosophy I heard Dr Battie's anatomical lectures I had learned French at Eton I learnt Italian at Cambridge of Signor Piazza At home I learned to dance and fence, and to draw of Bernard Lens, master to the Duke and Princesses

"The Duke" was he of Cumberland who afterwards, as the Biobdingnagian "Nollkejumskoi", made the flimsy towers of Strawberry Hill vibrate at his tread During one of these drawing-lessons Monsieur Lens made of his small pupil a sketch which still exists. "Master Horace Walpole" there appears as a rather prim and plaintive-looking boy, with unexpectedly chubby cheeks and calves Still earlier portraits, notably the two miniatures now in the possession of Mr Ralph Nevill, show a fragile, intelligent child with very dark eyes and a disproportionately long nose. To the Cambridge period belongs the painting by Jonathan Richardson, curiously stiff and unpleasing, with its

elongated, inscrutable face, resembling that of one of Orcagna's narrow-cheeked, narrow-eyed Saints, and its bottle-shaped body, dwindling at the shoulders and broadening below the waist

It was for a very short time indeed that "blind Professor Sanderson" numbered the Prime Minister's son among his students. The story is best told in Walpole's own words to Mann

When I first went to Cambridge I was to learn mathematics of the famous blind Professor Sanderson. I had not frequented him a fortnight before he said to me, "Young man, it is cheating you to take your money, believe me, you can never learn these things, you have no capacity for them." I can smile now, but I cried then with mortification. The next step, in order to comfort myself, was not to believe him. I could not conceive that I had not talents for anything in the world. I took at my own expense a private instructor, who came to me once a day for a year. Nay, I took infinite pains, but had so little capacity, and so little attention (as I have always had to anything that did not immediately strike my inclinations) that after mastering any proposition, when the man came the next day, it was as new to me as if I had never heard of it.

It may have been during a transient mood of mortification, following upon the discovery that he had not, after all, "talents for anything in the world", that Walpole fell under the influence of an evangelical undergraduate with a dynamic personality, Henry Coventry by name. Fired by Coventry's enthusiasm, he became suddenly pious. Together they invaded the dolorous precincts of Cambridge gaol in order to read passages from the Bible to the captives then languishing there. It is an almost incredible vision this, of the long, lank, lackadaisical Horace treading the prison flags with that characteristic gait of his, which

one observer compared to a peewit's and he himself to "the march of a dabchick", it is an almost stupefying thought that he actually sat, enunciating scriptural phrases in his low-pitched, drawling voice, surrounded by listeners bearing a strong physical affinity to the tatterdemalion chorus in the *Beggar's Opera*

The phase was as brief as it was fantastic. Like many another white-hot enthusiast, Coventry lived to cool and harden into an adamant state of heterodoxy. Walpole's own views upon religion underwent a less painful transformation. What he himself might have called his "old-fashioned breeding" kept him tolerant and temperate in these matters, after the first vehemence of his youthful Protestantism had spent its force, and it was his good fortune never to lose the last vestiges of his belief in that Power which the eighteenth century so politely denominated the Supreme Being.

During one of his frequent absences from the University in 1735 Walpole sent Gray a light-hearted *jeu d'esprit* in the form of a parody of Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*, describing a journey from London to Cambridge. Whitechapel figures as "Tempialbulo" and Newmarket as "Nuovo Foro", and stray lines from Virgil, Horace, and Juvenal are ingeniously distorted so as to apply to the places passed on the way. This epistle is interesting, chiefly on account of the evidence it gives of the writer's first vague leanings towards mediævalism—witness the mock-mediæval legend woven around Bournbridge—and of his dislike for Cambridge (Pavia).

Though Walpole was no more industrious as an undergraduate than he had been as an oppidan, his knowledge of the classics seems to have been at least

respectable His early letters, especially those to Gray and West, show that, despite a streak of callow pedantry, he was master of something more than a collection of serviceable "tags" Advancing years sensibly diminished his enthusiasm for Virgil, of whom he was apt to write a little peevishly at times, but for Horace his affection never waned For the Roman Horace had claims upon "Albion's old Horace" that Virgil could never have Both were wits, both were *flâneurs*, well-versed in "polite letters and a knowledge of this world" to both

Puræ rivus aquae, silvaque iugerum
Paucorum, et segetis certa fides meae

were dear It always pleased Walpole to recollect that he was the namesake of the Latin poet whom he loved best, and to find analogies between Tibur and Twickenham, the Sabine Hills and Strawberry Hill

At Cambridge, as at Eton, much of Horace Walpole's reading seems to have been of a desultory and capricious kind Already the quaint and the outlandish appealed to his imagination. In 1735 we see him deep in a history of China, and storing his memory with impressions afterwards to be revived in the *Letter of Xo Ho* and *Hieroglyphic Tales*, and in the name of "Poyang" bestowed upon the goldfish-pond at Strawberry Hill Fragments and phrases from English, French, and Italian writers, not all of the first eminence, jostle each other in his correspondence at this time. Shakespeare and Milton, Tasso and Boileau, alternate with Shadwell and Rowe and Lee He was not—he never aspired to be—a profound scholar, and "Fiddling Conyers" Middleton's tribute to him as "Juvenis non tam generis nobilitate ac paterni nominis

gloria, quam ingenio, doctrina et virtute propria illustris" was probably written with one eye upon Sir Robert (then Lord Orford) and the other upon the truth. *Ingenium* was a quality which Mr Walpole would always have rated high, whether ascribed to himself or discerned in others, in his eyes *doctrina*—and perhaps even *virtus*—might have seemed much less admirable.

Between 1735 and 1737 many influences combined to draw the young man away from the barbarous town of "Pavia." Sir Robert, as First Commissioner of the Treasury, had taken possession, in September 1735, of "the new house in St James's Park", destined to be the official residence of all his successors to the present day, where he remained until his final fall from power in 1742. There was much to divert the Prime Minister's youngest son in a social London dominated by his father's party and his father's partisans, there was hardly less to interest him at Houghton, where Ripley's labours had reached completion in the same year that saw Sir Robert's installation at Downing Street. Among walls panelled with tenebrous mahogany and under ceilings thickly encrusted with medallions and *amorum*, torches and garlands, Sir Robert's great collection of paintings was then in process of accumulation. Anything less "Gothic" than Houghton it would be impossible to conceive; but Horace Walpole's mediæval tendencies were still more or less dormant, and his fast-developing dilettantism, joined to his filial pride in the visible and tangible achievements of Houghton's creator, made him prefer the "noble edifice and spacious plantations" in Norfolk to the ill-paved streets of Cambridge.

Deep in his heart, and clean against his Whiggish principles, he may have felt that he would have been more at home in that other barbarous town, Oxford, whither he went on a visit to West in the summer of 1736. He seems to have praised Oxford quite immoderately to his Cambridge friends on his return, for Almanzor wrote to Favonius that from the descriptions they heard they could "imagine nothing less than Heaven-top'd Towers, Hesperian groves and Gates of Chrysolite"

The sight of the spot where John and Thomas Lyttleton had been drowned in the Cherwell just a hundred years earlier inspired Walpole to compose a set of heroic couplets in the very worst style of the eighteenth-century monumental mason. The "poet" himself was sufficiently well pleased with them to send a copy to his friend Charles Lyttleton, to whom he had paid a high-flown compliment in the closing lines, which tell how the River God

In bubbling murmurs told his grief till here
He saw another Lyttleton appear,
No more a double loss he could bemoan,
Finding the worth of two compis'd in one

A few days later he was sending to George Montagu a deft and not unpleasing English version of a French lyrical dialogue between an inquiring passer-by and a disconsolate dove. It was probably the recollection of these or similar ventures into verse on the part of his quondam pupil which prompted the fatuous and servile John Whaley, shortly after Walpole had left Cambridge, to ask anxiously.

Flows from thy pen the sweet spontaneous line?

"Spontaneous" is good!

The frequent absences of Celadon from Cambridge provoked Orozmades to whimsical letters of protest

“Ashton terrifies me,” he writes, in March 1736, “with telling me that according to his latest Advices we are to remain in a State of Separation from you the Lord knows how much longer, we are inconsolable at the News, and weep our half-pint a-piece every day about it, if you don’t make haste you may chance to find a couple of Fountains by your fireside ”

The Horace Walpole whom we encounter in the early letters to Gray, Lyttleton, and West is already, and quite recognisably, the Horace of a thousand later letters, the possessor of an intellect agile and alert rather than profound, of a sense of humour light, resilient, fantastic, delighting in whimsical exaggerations and quaintly incongruous images, of a literary style at once flexible and compact, lucid and precise. The gallicising process, which was afterwards to crystallise these qualities of lucidity and precision with results unpleasing to Macaulay, had not at this time seriously begun. The letter-writer is, perhaps, a little foppish, a little finicking, more than a little affected. But there are moments when one cannot avoid the conclusion that he is striving to mask, perhaps even to moderate, a nervous sensibility of temperament by an assumption of well-bred cynicism and unconcern.

Despite his artless conviction that he had “talents for anything in the world”, Mr Walpole of King’s seems to have nourished few illusions as to his poetical faculty. The marriage of Frederick, Prince of Wales, with Augusta of Saxe-Gotha in the summer of 1736 was the occasion for an outburst of congratulatory Latin verse at Cambridge, and Sir Robert’s son could not well have

held aloof Together with Ashton and Gray, he contributed to the frigid, pompous, and disingenuous *Gratulatio* laid by their University at the feet of Prince Titu and his not-remarkably-beautiful bride A year later Walpole was giving West a taste of his quality as a writer of English verse

"I assure you," he wrote, "I don't think I am at all a Poet, but from loving verses try to make some now and then There are few but try in their lives, and most of us succeed alike"

In these words he introduces a set of nine sextets, beginning,

Seeds of Poetry and Rhime
Nature in my soul implanted

This trifle was formerly attributed to Gray, and a copy exists in his handwriting, but it is distinctly in the vein of Celadon, which sobriquet Gray himself appended to the manuscript The fifth stanza is especially "Horatian"

Battles, Sieges, Men at Arms,
In Heroick Verse I'm reading,
I burn to write with Myra's charms
In Episode, to show my breeding,
But if my Myra cruel be,
I tell her so in Elegy

The slackness of the prosody is a little curious, when we consider how faithful an admirer Walpole was of Pope's style, and how admirable are the structure and cadence of his own prose

It was seven months after he had perpetrated this piece of metrical fatuity that the heaviest sorrow of his life befell Horace Walpole. On August 20, 1737, Lady Walpole died, and her evanishment left a blank in his

heart that never was filled Gray, closing a letter to West three days later, says,

While I write to you I hear the bad news of Lady Walpole's death, on Saturday night last Forgive me if the thought of what my poor Horace must feel on that account obliges me to have done

Poor Horace's need of fortitude was indeed very great Before the first Lady Walpole had been dead for a year, Sir Robert led Maria Skerrett to the altar

"His wedding", wrote Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, "was celebrated as if he had been King of France crowds of people of the first quality being presented to the bride, who is the daughter of a clerk that sung the psalms in a church where Dr Sacheverell was "

It is difficult to conceive how Horace Walpole could well have found any semblance of a home either at Houghton or at Downing Street while his mother's supplanter reigned But before the first anniversary of her predecessor's death came round the second Lady Walpole was laid at her side in the family vault. Towards the end of the year 1738 the Prime Minister's youngest son left Cambridge, without taking a degree "And after this", as Sir Edmund Gosse observes, "he was a kind of waif and stray", until he set out on his continental wanderings in the spring of 1739

CHAPTER II

THE "VERSES IN MEMORY OF KING HENRY THE SIXTH"
—CONTINENTAL WANDERINGS—THE "EPISTLE TO
ASHTON"—THE QUARREL WITH GRAY

WITH the laudable object of providing for his youngest son without, at the same time, diminishing his own revenues, Sir Robert Walpole obtained for him in 1737 the post of Inspector of Imports and Exports at the Custom House. His eldest son he had already made Auditor of the Exchequer, his second—and favourite—was Clerk of the Pells, and the income from a collectorship of the Customs which had been granted to him for three lives was to be divided between the second and the third sons. In 1738 Horace relinquished his first sinecure on being appointed Usher of the Exchequer, and, as he himself tells us, as soon as he came of age he took possession of two other little patent places in the Exchequer called the Comptroller of the Pipe and the Clerk of the Estreats. There is a pleasant feudal smack about all these things. The office of Comptroller of the Pipe, instituted under Henry II, was not abolished till the reign of William IV, its holder, or his deputy, had to deal with leases of Crown lands. The Estreats were transcripts of the original records of fines and amercements leviable

by bailiffs and other myrmidons of the law. The nominal duties of the Usher of the Exchequer included shutting the gates of the Exchequer building, and providing its clerks with paper, pens, ink, wax, sand, tape, penknives, scissors, and parchment. A scale fixed in the reign of Edward III regulated the emoluments of this post, and—what must have irked the more scrupulous Ushers a little—these were payable only under warrants signed by the First Lord of the Treasury for the time being.

Here we are—happily—concerned rather with Horace Walpole's attitude towards the system of "places" than with the ethics of the system itself. From first to last it was an attitude of conscious, and even aggressive, innocence and virtue. When, in 1782, a commission was set up to investigate the whole complicated question, he did not cling indecently to his perquisites, but he *did* draw up an *Account of My Conduct relative to the Places I hold under Government* which is at once an Apologia and a Confession of Faith, and vibrates with breathless—and, it would seem, honest—indignation in every line. He declares roundly that.

Patent places for life have existed from time immemorial, by law, and under all changes of Government. He who holds an ancient patent place enjoys it as much by law as any gentleman holds his estate. . . . nor can I think myself, as a patent placeman, a more useless or less legal engrosser of part of the wealth of the nation than deans and prebendaries.

And, indeed, he always regarded himself quite seriously as a model of disinterestedness and probity in these matters. He truckled to none of the successive

ministers upon whose will or whim the payment of his salary depended. Neither Grenville's attempt to conciliate him by expediting certain over-due payments, nor Henry Fox's postponement of certain others, had the slightest effect. It is true that he employed the Exchequer porters to bear his anonymous alms to poor prisoners, and that he drew upon official stores when he needed fresh supplies of gilt-edged paper for his correspondence, but neither of these proceedings was highly reprehensible.

Paternal anxiety about the young man's revenues being thus happily assuaged, Sir Robert's next proceeding was to look about him in quest of some borough which Horace might represent in Parliament—a quest which promised no difficulties. Early in 1738, however, the subject of "his wonted equity and tenderness" was interested in nothing so little as in the Exchequer and the Pipe Office, the Estreats and the House of Commons. At that time he was, as far as in him lay, writing poetry and falling in love. The more perturbing of these two pursuits is not reflected in the poetry, which is dedicated not to a living lady but to a dead king. These heroic couplets *In Memory of King Henry the Sixth* are, beyond doubt or question, very sorry stuff indeed. Dryden and Pope are obviously the writer's models, but in his earnest efforts to reproduce the methods of those supreme couplet-fashioners Walpole has merely produced something akin to the least felicitous achievements of John Philips and Thomas Tickell. Clipped words occur in almost every line, and the cæsura comes clumping down steadily after the second beat. Yet the thing itself is not devoid of interest as an indication of

Walpole's intellectual orientation at the age of twenty-one. It breathes a spirit of uncompromising and almost truculent Protestantism, striking this note at the outset, and suffering its reverberations to die down only at the very end

While superstition teaches to revere
The sainted calendar and lettered year,
While bigots joy in canonising shades
Fictitious martyrs, visionary maids,
Haste, Gratitude, and hail this better day,
At Henry's shrine present thy votive lay

It is soon made clear that in the eyes of the poet "Henry's shrine" compared very unfavourably with Houghton. The future apostle of mediævalism, though he vouchsafes a passing allusion to the "grandeur of the Gothic isle" (*sic*), has not yet extricated himself from the fetters of Augustan taste, for he remarks regretfully that when Eton College Chapel was built

Art and Palladio had not reach'd the land
Nor methodis'd the Vandal builder's hand

"The Vandal builder"—Shades of "Strawberry"!

In his closing apostrophe to the king Walpole betrays a disconcerting and incomprehensible lack of humour, as well as an absence of the historic sense that leaves the reader gasping

O Henry! from thy lucid orb regard
How purer hands thy pious cares reward;
Now Heav'n illuminates thy god-like mind
From Superstition's papal gloom refin'd,
Behold thy sons with that religion blest
Which thou wou'dst own and Caroline profess'd

The writer's own views of "Superstition's papal gloom", as well as his ideas about architecture, were

destined to undergo considerable modifications within the next decade. For the moment his thoughts were fixed elsewhere.

"My best Horace," Gray wrote to him in February 1738, "I confess I am amazed, of all likely things this is the last I should have believed would come to pass. I don't wonder at the new study you have taken a liking to, first, because it diverts your thoughts from disagreeable objects, next, because it particularly suits your genius, and lastly because I believe it to be the most excellent of all sciences."

This is the first faint, fugitive glimpse that we catch of Horace Walpole's first romance, but who the lady was, whether—as seems most probable—his cousin Anne Seymour Conway, or another, we have no certain knowledge. Gray writes of the admiration felt by Ashton and himself for their friend's "judgment and conduct", from which it would appear that some barrier of prudence, honour, or duty, stood between Celadon and his shepherdess. West, on the other hand, cannot have been taken so early into Walpole's confidence. In the verses which he sent to him after a visit to Sir Robert's "moss-grown shed" in Richmond Park during the summer of 1738, we find no hint of any knowledge of this new enthusiasm for "the most excellent of all sciences". Two years later there is little or no doubt as to the identity of Celadon's most admired shepherdess with Miss Conway. "It seems", writes Dr. Paget Toynbee, "to have been an open secret that he was attached to her"; and she is alluded to by name both by Whaley and by West.

As early as the month of October 1735, a rumour had been current to the effect that "Horatio Walpole Esq." was "setting out to make the Tour of Italy", and it is

probable that he and Gray had often talked over the possibility of a continental ramble together before they should settle down, the younger man to a predestined Parliamentary career, the elder to a life of academic stagnation at Cambridge. This fruitless and inconclusive infatuation for Anne Seymour Conway may have been one of the strongest of the various motives which induced Walpole to revert to this idea early in 1739. He then sought and obtained Sir Robert's leave to spend a year or two in France and Italy, with Gray as his travelling companion. Before they departed, on March 10th of that year, Walpole, unknown to Gray, made a will bequeathing all his property to him in the event of his dying during their travels.

The choice of Orozmales as his companion was a natural but, as the sequel proved, hardly a happy one. The poet was a man of moods, of an uneven and occasionally atrabilious temperament, he had none of the suppleness and little of the philosophy necessary in the rôle for which he was now cast. "Bear I was born," he wrote of himself once, "and Bear I believe I'm like to remain." Yet the fact that these queerly-matched yoke-fellows should have jogged along together for two years and three months suggests that Walpole was less of a coxcomb than he seemed, and Gray less of a bear than he believed himself to be.

At the outset, the travellers proceeded in a very leisurely manner, making their way to Paris through Montreuil, Abbéville, and Amiens, and revelling in the sight of unfamiliar landscapes and figures, the pleasant meadows of Picardy, the strolling friars, the muff-carrying peasants, the blue-hooded women bestriding

diminutive donkeys Gray's early letters are almost as light-hearted as his companion's, but in his first to West from Paris there is a faint hint of trouble in store "Mr Walpole is gone out to supper at Lord Conway's," he writes, "and here I remain alone, though invited too" That first experience was later to be repeated at frequent intervals Walpole was constantly flitting away to a supper, a masquerade, or a *fête-champêtre*, and Gray as constantly remaining alone, though almost always "invited too". Even more illuminating is the closing paragraph in a letter to Ashton, in which Gray observes

We are exceedingly unsettled and irresolute, don't know our own Minds for two Moments together In short, I think the greatest *evil* that could have happen'd to us is our liberty, for we are not at all capable to determine our own actions

West, pursuing the tedious study of the law within the precincts of the Temple, was the recipient of most of Walpole's surviving letters from France In the earliest of these it is clear that the letter-writer had already evolved his peculiar conversational style, with its pauses and accelerations, its subtle changes of tempo, suggestive of the cadences of a living voice

Stand by, clear the way, make room for the pompous appearance of Versailles le grand! But no, it tell so short of my idea of it—mine—that I have resigned to Gray the office of writing its panegyric He likes it They say I am to like it better next Sunday, when the sun is to shine, the king is to be fine, the water-works are to play, and the new Knights of the Holy Ghost are to be installed Ever since Wednesday, the day we were there, we have done nothing but dispute about it They say we did not see it to advantage I say we saw nothing However, we

had time to see that the great front is a lumber of little-nesses, composed of black brick, stuck full of bad old busts, and fringed with gold rails

Lord Holderness, the English Ambassador, bestirred himself—and not in vain—to make the sojourn of the Prime Minister's son in Paris agreeable. Of Parisian society under Louis XV Sir Edmund Gosse says, "It was a charming world of fancy and caprice, a world of milky clouds floating in an infinite azure, and bearing a mundane Venus to her throne in a Frenchified Cytherea" Its somewhat tawdry and fantastic graces found an instant response in the lightly-poised mind of Horace Walpole, while even Gray threw off, for the moment, his congenital tendency to "allicholy and musing", ordered resplendent new suits of clothes, and plunged with ardour into the hectic diamas of M. Crébillon and the flimsy, whimsical comedies of M. Marivaux

It was not long before Walpole became conscious that the amount of French he had acquired at Eton was quite inadequate. He therefore formed the heroic resolve to spend three months studying the language intensively with Gray and Conway at Rheims, where it was arranged that George Selwyn and George Montagu should join them. "You must not wonder", he wrote thence to West, "if all my letters resemble dictionaries with English on one side and French on t'other, I deal in nothing else at present, and talk a couple of words alternately in each language from morning till night"

Gray had previously informed Ashton that he and Walpole expected "to be very dull" at Rheims, and in his own case the expectation would appear to have

been fulfilled Selwyn and Montagu, too, were "pretty heartily tired" of the place, after a sojourn of three weeks Walpole, on the other hand, found the life rather agreeable It was largely *la vie en pantoufles*, casual and inconsequent, but enlivened by various "parties of quadrille" in the houses of the local "quality", by at least one joyous *al fresco* supper, and by the intrusion of a comic Irishman, who burst in upon Walpole, Gray, and Conway as they were "lounging half-dressed round a littered table and in a crummy room"

Towards the end of September the three travellers left Rheims for Dijon, whence they proceeded to Lyons, whose environs they found "beautiful beyond expression", Conway was bound for Geneva, and Gray and Walpole escorted him thither, making a *détour* by the way in order to visit the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse The "abundance and volubility" of Mr Walpole were much increased by the spectacle of "the mountains of Savoy", and it may be that some first faint stirrings of romantic enthusiasm gave a keener edge to his delight Under Gray's influence he had already advanced some way ahead of their generation, for the mid-eighteenth century had no use for mountain scenery, and vastly preferred parterres

Writing to West, Walpole unburdens himself in this fervent strain.

Precipices, mountains, torients, wolves, rumblings, Salvator Rosa here we are, the lonely lords of glorious desolate prospects I begin this letter among the clouds, where I shall finish it my neighbour heaven probably knows, 'tis an odd wish in a mortal letter to hope

not to finish it on this side the atmosphere You will have a billet tumble to you from the stars when least you think of it, and that I should write it, too! Lord, how potent that sounds! But I am to undergo many transmigrations before I come to "yours ever" Yesterday I was a shepherd of Dauphiné, to-day, an Alpine savage, to-morrow a Carthusian monk, and Friday a Swiss Calvinist

Each stage of the journey was marked by a fresh access of enthusiasm Two days later he was writing from Aix-en-Savoie.

But the road, West, the road! Winding round a prodigious mountain, and surrounded with others, all shagged with hanging woods, obscured with pines, or lost in clouds! Below, a torrent breaking through cliffs, and tumbling through fragments of rocks! Sheets of cascades forcing their silver speed down channelled precipices, and hastening into the roughened river at the bottom!

"Your description of the Alps made me shudder," said Favonius, in his reply

The year was now waning fast, and Walpole and Gray were still on the French side of the Alps, those Alps which frowned down upon them more grimly with every dwindling day that passed Upon their return from Geneva to Lyons the two procrastinators found letters waiting from Sir Robert, who urged them to make no longer tarrying, but to push on to Italy with the least possible delay

Even so, it was not until the end of October that the travellers set out

"At the foot of Mount Cenis", wrote Walpole to West, "we were obliged to quit our chaise, which was taken all to pieces and loaded upon mules, and we were carried in low arm-chaus on poles, swathed in beaver bonnets, beaver gloves, beaver stockings, muffs and bear-skins When

we came to the top, behold the snows fallen! and such quantities, and conducted by such heavy clouds that hung glouting, that I thought we could never have waded through them "

Walpole would never stir very far afield without taking a small dog with him. During his sojourn in Paris Lord Conway had given him "a little black spaniel of King Charles's breed, but the prettiest, fattest, dearest creature!" A tragic fate awaited poor Tory—as it was christened—"on the top of one of the highest Alps", where, while "waddling along close to the head of the horses", it was pounced upon and carried off by a wolf. "It was shocking", wrote Tory's master to West, "to see anything one loved run away with to so horrid a death." There spoke the boy who had been so much relieved to learn "by Tom" that all his "cruatuars" were "wall!"

The first halt was made at Turin, which Walpole thought "by far one of the prettiest cities" he had seen, but which Gray found rather ramshackle and unconvincing. Ten days were spent at Genoa, than which the poet "never beheld anything more amiable." Thence, by way of a "mountain all of green marble, called Buchetto", in the Ligurian Apennines, they passed through Piacenza, Parma (where the Correggios in the cathedral stirred their enthusiasm), and Modena to Bologna, "the third city in Italy for pictures." Thence Walpole writes to West

Except pictures and statues we are not very fond of sights, don't go a-staring after crooked towers and conundrum staircases. Now and then we drop in at a procession or a high mass, hear the music, enjoy a strange attire, and hate the foul monkhood.

At Bologna the younger pilgrim had felt the lack of social introductions, and had shivered a little to find himself left bleakly to his own devices. The case was altered when they reached Florence at the end of the year. There they encountered a person whose supreme and overmastering desire it was to make himself serviceable to the son of his patron, Sir Robert. This was Horace Mann, appointed secretary of the English legation two years previously, and marked out already as the successor of the futile and *faméant* English envoy, Mr (afterwards Lord) Fane. The Manns, who belonged to the small squirearchy, were distant connections of the Walpoles, but had themselves such slender pretensions to patrician descent that Mann's position among the supercilious Florentines was occasionally one of some difficulty. This person, destined to loom so large in the literary life of Horace Walpole, remains a somewhat indistinct and baffling figure. Perhaps it is not easy at this distance to detect those qualities in him which caught at once, and held for forty-five years, the regard of a creature so capricious as Celadon, and which drew from a creature as morose as Orozmales the affirmation that he was "the best and most obliging person in the world". To us the obliging "Miny", as Walpole nicknamed him, appears timid, pompous and self-seeking, but Sir Robert never had any reason to doubt the sincerity of his professed devotion to the Walpole dynasty, and the English Government found him a useful servant, vigilant in reporting every movement of the Old Pretender's faded and forlorn court at Rome.

In his first Florentine letter to West Walpole confesses that, though he had seen several things that

pleased him calmly, he had "left off screaming Lord this! and Lord that!" During the first weeks of their sojourn in Florence, he and Gray seem to have gone their several ways by mutual consent, and in all good fellowship. While the poet plunged with rapture into the unfamiliar domain of Italian music, his companion, who was congenitally incapable of distinguishing one tune from another, threw himself with ardour into the more frivolous pursuits of the high-born Florentines.

The death of Pope Clement XII, in February 1740, suggested to the travellers that the coronation of his successor would be a spectacle worth seeing.

"Harry," writes Walpole to Conway, "art thou so indifferent as to have a cousin at the election without courting him for news? Popes, Cardinals, adorations, coronations, St Peter's! oh, what costly sounds! And don't you write to one yet?"

In some haste, lest the conclave should make up its mind with a precipitancy contrary to all precedent, the travellers set off for Rome by way of Siena, the journey occupying four days. Their ascent of Mount Radicofani was enlivened by a passing encounter with a corpulent, shrill-voiced, red-cloaked person, whom they discovered to be none other than Senesino the opera-singer. In a dilapidated hostelry on the top of the mountain they spent a cheerless night, and thence Walpole writes to West

RE DI COFFANO, *March 23*,
where lived one of the three kings

The King of Coffano carried presents of gold, myrrh, and frankincense, I don't know where the devil he found them for in all his dominions we have not seen the value of a shrub. We have the honour of lodging under his roof to-night. Lord! such a place, such an extent of ugliness!

A lone inn upon a black mountain by the side of an old fortress! No curtains or windows, only shutters! No testers to the beds! No earthly thing to eat but some eggs and a few little fishes

As they came downhill from Viterbo, the pilgrims caught a glimpse of St Peter's dome "The first entrance to Rome is prodigiously striking," Gray informed his mother Walpole, however, seems to have suffered from that queer sense of disillusionment which many people experience on being confronted with a reality that has long been an idea To him the Cassian and Flaminian Ways were "terrible disappointments", and he was disconcerted to observe that the ruins were "very ruined" Rather ruefully he tells West that he is glad to see Rome, "while it yet exists", and indeed the picture that he draws is the reverse of inspiring The Romans he finds shabby, avaricious, and unlettered, the villas "entirely out of repair", half the pictures in the palaces mouldering away, the famous gardens encumbered with forlorn fragments of antiquity That the city should be "littered with French and German Abbés" during the conclave was hardly strange, but the reiterated spectacle of these ecclesiastics seems to have ruffled Mr Walpole's Protestant feelings The pervasion of Rome by the Jacobites was also perturbing to him All these things were very distracting "Papists" and Jacobites—were they not equally obnoxious to all right-minded persons? And where were they more likely to be numerous and active than in Rome?

Frascati, Tivoli, and the Alban hills left the pilgrims comparatively cold Gray informs West, "Mr Walpole says our memory sees more than our eyes in this

country", and Gray's mind was the more richly furnished. The conclave dragged on inconclusively, the weather was dull and bleak. Before June was half spent they decided to betake themselves to Naples. "You know," exclaims Walpole to Ashton, "'twould be provoking to have a Pope chosen just as one's back is turned." He need have felt no such misgivings. When, after having visited (and described at great length to West) the "subterraneous town of Herculaneum", and having, in Gray's words, "sailed in the bay of Baiae, sweated in the Solfatura, and died in the Grotta del Cane, as all travellers do", the two returned to Rome at the end of June, the Cardinals seemed as far as ever from reaching a decision. So Walpole and Gray gravitated back to Florence, to the riverside palace of the complaisant and obliging Mann.

"You will wonder, my dear Hal," Walpole writes to Conway, early in July, "to find me on my road from Rome why, I did intend to stay for a new popedom, but the old eminences are cross and obstinate, and will not choose one, the Holy Ghost knows when."

Though Gray could not quit "Rome's azure sky, flowers, ruins, statues, music", without a certain sense of regret, it is clear that his fellow-traveller was delighted to find himself by the Arno once more, to muffle his attenuated form in his discarded domino again, and to renew his gossamer flirtation with the reigning toast of Florence, Madame Giffoni.

Florentine society in the winter of 1740-41 was distracting to Horace Walpole in more ways than one. There were elements in it that diverted him vastly, and others that disquieted and perturbed. To this

second category belonged the pervasion of Florence by a triad of fantastic English *précieuses*, Lady Pomfret, a "she-meteor", Lady Walpole, the erratic absentee wife of Sir Robert's eldest son, and, crowning source of annoyance and derision, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. For the "old, foul, tawdry, painted, plastered personage" of Lady Mary, *ahas* "Moll Worthless", Walpole nourished an inextinguishable aversion, though that he treated her with outward civility she herself later bore witness. He might have pardoned her for her affectations, he who had so many, he might have pardoned her for her wit, he who had so much, but for her unforgotten and aggressive devotion to Maria Skerrett he could by no means find it in his heart to pardon her. Only a little less unwelcome was the apparition of his preposterous sister-in-law. Lady Pomfret's presence was made more tolerable by the charms of her two daughters, the Ladies Fermor. A faint, floating legend has persisted to the effect that Walpole's *feu-follet* of a heart flickered for a moment in the direction of one of these graceful sisters.

One of his less frivolous diversions during the year 1740 was the composition of an *Inscription for the Neglected Column in the Place of St. Mark at Florence*, afterwards printed in his *Fugitive Pieces*. It is a frigid and pompous piece of rhetoric, full of anti-popish zeal, and thickly studded with biographical allusions to the less reputable scions of the House of Medici. Early in the following year his pen was more seriously and more laboriously employed, inditing a long, closely-packed, didactic poem in the form of an *Epistle to Thomas Ashton, Esq., Tutor to the Earl of Plymouth*.

The purpose of the *Epistle* is to exhort Ashton to implant sound Protestant and Whiggish—not to say Republican—sentiments in the mind of his pupil, and incidentally to convince him that

'Tis not a slavish senate, fawning, base,
Can stamp with honest fame a worthless race,
Though the false coin proclaim him great and wise,
The tyrant's life shall tell that coin it lyes

Young Mr Walpole, in a fine frenzy of anti-Popery and anti-tyranny, is a fearful fellow That subtly-tempered and delicately-poised sense of humour which pervades even his undergraduate prose is, as it were, suspended for the time being He stamps and rages like some unperfect actor on the stage, and there is indeed a strong suggestion of the allegorical drop-scene, the emblematic "transparency", in some of his images He bids Ashton lead his young charge

where Dover's rugged cliff re-sounds

With dashing seas, fair Freedom's honest bounds,
Point to yon azure Car bedrop'd with gold
Whose weight the necks of Gallia's sons uphold,
Where proudly sits an iron-sceptred queen
And fondly triumphs o'er the prostrate scene,
Say "That is empire!" shun her baleful breath,
Her words are slavery, her touch is death,
Through wounds and blood the fury drives her way,
And murders half to make the rest her prey "

From this otherwise arid and stilted *Epistle* one passage detaches itself by virtue of a certain energy of imagination, one passage in which there is a certain Guido-esque richness of colour Its content was derived largely from Dr Conyers Middleton's pamphlet, *A Letter from Rome showing the Exact Conformity between Popery and Paganism*

No pagan object, nothing too profane
To aid the Romish zeal for Christian gain,
Each temple with new weight of idols nods,
And borrow'd altars smoke to other gods
Prometheus' vulture Matthew's eagle proves,
And heavenly cherubs sprout from heathen loves,
Young Ganymede a winged angel stands
By holy Luke, and dictates God's commands,
Apollo, though degraded, still can bless,
Rewarded with a sainthood and an S
Each convert godhead is apostolis'd,
And Jove himself by Peter's name baptiz'd

Here it is just possible to discern those qualities of "spirit and thought", though hardly original thought, which Gray generously declared that he found in the poem. Where he found "a good deal of poetic fire" must for ever remain a mystery. Breathless, the reader is swept through six centuries of English history, the various monarchs being sketched in more or less unflattering outlines by the way. The Plantagenets arouse the writer's ire by their quite unaccountable adhesion to "Popery", and the earlier Tudors fare little better at his hands, though one suspects him of harbouring a vague sympathy for that "reveller profuse", Henry VIII. His most unrelenting malice is of course reserved for the already luckless House of Stuart. Touched, perhaps, by a remembrance of their common enthusiasm for medals and pictures, he is comparatively gentle with Charles I, boldly ascribing all his "acts of lawless pow'r" to the baleful influence of Henrietta Maria and Archbishop Laud. When he comes to Charles II, who "liv'd an atheist and a bigot dy'd", and to James II., "meditating to subvert the laws", he feels no such compunctious visitings. The final, and somewhat obscure, vision is one where

victor George thunders o'er either Spain,
Reverges Britain and asserts the main

By far the most interesting passage is that in which Walpole gives us a sudden glimpse of himself

What time fair Florence, on her peaceful shore
Free from the din of war and battle's roar,
Has lap'd me trifier in inglorious ease,
Modelling precepts that may serve and please

It was about this time that Gray was writing to West of "fair Florence" as "an excellent place to employ all one's animal sensations in, but utterly contrary to one's rational powers", and remarking, "I have struck a medal upon myself the device is thus—O, and the motto, *Nihilssimo*, which I take in the most concise manner to contain a full account of my person, sentiments, occupations, and late glorious successes"

It cannot be doubted that when those words were written Orozmales had already begun to drag at the chain attaching him to Celadon. Before the ensuing year was half-spent, the over-strained link had given way

Among the English sojourners in Florence with whom both Walpole and Gray found most in common was John Chute, the *suavissime Chuti* of the poet's later apostrophe. Though born a younger son, Chute lived to inherit The Vyne, a delightful old Tudor house four miles from Basingstoke, but between 1740 and 1746 he resided chiefly on the Continent, much of his time being passed at Mann's house, the Casa Manetti, on the brink of the Arno. Chute was a pleasant person to know, he was witty, good-humoured, infinitely well-bred, he collected medals and suffered

from gout, as a gentleman should. With him in Florence was his somewhat dandified young kinsman, Francis Thistlethwayte, who had recently, under the will of an uncle whose estate he had inherited, assumed the name of Whitehead. "The Chuteheds", as Walpole nicknamed them, were soon on terms of close and happy friendship with their two fellow-countrymen. The ever-gloomier Gray no less than the ever-flightier Walpole felt the steadying and mollifying influence of John Chute's personality. Indeed, it seems not unlikely that but for his unobtrusive mediation between them, the now inevitable clash would have come sooner than it actually came.

During the summer of 1740 the Conclave had elected a new Pope, Benedict XIV, but Walpole's eagerness to behold a pontifical coronation seems to have been blunted by long delays, or perhaps he had grown too indolent to satisfy it. In any case, he was not present at the ceremony, and, though probably more than "a little tired of seeing sights", his intentions did not turn homeward definitely and actively until April 1741. Political events in England may then have jogged his elbow. Sir Robert was tottering to his fall—so often predicted, so often deferred—at last. His stubbornly pacific policy had exasperated a populace clamouring for war with Spain, and when war was actually declared in October 1739 this exasperation did not subside, as it was only too well known that the minister's heart was against the declaration. A hard winter followed, the first for several years, and Sir Robert was on that account the object of widespread though somewhat unreasonable resentment. Contrary winds hampered Admiral

Haddock in the Mediterranean, and Spanish privateers were able to harass English shipping. The Prime Minister's faint-heartedness appeared to encourage the very elements to array themselves against England. On February 13, 1741, it was moved, by Mr Sandys in the Commons and by Lord Carteret in the Lords, that Sir Robert Walpole be removed "from his Majesty's presence and counsels for ever." Though the motion was defeated, its repercussions were far-reaching and prolonged. Yet not until April did Horace Walpole and Gray leave Florence and proceed, by way of Bologna, to Reggio.

Gray's last Florentine letter to West suggests that the poet's nerves were now frayed almost to snapping-point. He emphasises his "want of love for general society", and his enthusiasm for the projected trip to Reggio does not appear to be great. Even Walpole, writing from Reggio itself, describes it as "a dirty little place", but he finds the fair, the object of their visit, wholly delightful. "All the morning one goes to the fair undressed, as to the walks of Tonbridge, 'tis just in that manner, with lotteries, raffles, etc." This fair seems to have had a peculiar attraction for English visitors. Lord Lincoln and his travelling tutor, Joseph Spence, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, whom Walpole and Gray had already encountered at Turin, now reappeared at Reggio. The Chutcheds, too, were there,

It was in this place, and at this juncture, that Gray's temper reached breaking-point, and that he and his fellow-traveller parted. The exact cause of their sudden separation remains obscure, nor is it clear whether they took leave of one another in blazing

wrath or with frigid and bitter politeness. In 1799 a certain Mr. Roberts of the Pell office (Edward Walpole had been Clerk of the Pells, one remembers), transmitted to Isaac Reed a vague legend that Gray had caught Walpole tampering with his private correspondence. If this were so, it is improbable that the breach would ever have been healed. Tovey discerns the ungainly figure of Almanzor in the background, and a letter from Gray to Wharton, written five years later, certainly lends colour to this theory. More illuminating are the poet's remarks to Walpole himself, in 1747:

It is a tenet with me (a simple one, you'll perhaps say) that if ever two people who love one another come to breaking, it is for want of a timely *éclaircissement*, a full and precise one, without witnesses or mediators, and without reserving any one disagreeable circumstance for the mind to brood over in silence.

Perhaps it was just the presence at Reggio of witnesses who were amiably anxious to act as mediators which rendered such an *éclaircissement* impossible. Thirty-two years later Walpole wrote to Gray's biographer, the enthusiastic though not over-scrupulous William Mason:

I am conscious that in the beginning of the differences between me and Gray the fault was mine. I was too young, too fond of my own diversions, nay, I do not doubt, too much intoxicated by indulgence, vanity, and the insolence of my situation as Prime Minister's son, not to have been inattentive and insensible to the feelings of one I thought below me, of one, I blush to say it, that I knew was obliged to me, of one whom presumption and folly, perhaps, made me deem not my superior *then* in parts, though I have since felt my infinite inferiority to him. I treated him insolently, he loved me and I did not think he did. I reproached him with the difference between

us, when he acted from convictions of knowing he was my superior. I often disregarded his wishes of seeing places, which I would not quit other amusements to visit, though I offered to send him to them without me. Forgive me if I say that his temper was not conciliating, at the same time that I will confess to you that he acted a more friendly part, had I had the sense to take advantage of it. He freely told me of my faults. I declared I did not desire to hear them, nor would correct them.

This explanation must always remain a document of singular interest to all students of Walpole's life and of Gray's. It throws much light upon the character of each in early manhood, and of that of Walpole in middle age. It is, as Sir Edmund Gosse says, "generous, frank and lucid", and it has certainly left in the minds of many readers a sense of sympathy with the younger traveller.

Whatever the cause, and whatever the circumstances, of the severance may have been, it was as complete as it was abrupt. Gray pressed on to Venice in the company of the Chuteheds, and Walpole, already sickening for an attack of tonsillitis, remained behind at Reggio with Lord Lincoln and Joseph Spence.

CHAPTER III

RETURN TO ENGLAND—POLITICAL SKITS AND PARODIES
—“A SERMON ON PAINTING”—“ÆDES WALPOLIANÆ”

IN writing to West from Reggio Walpole made no mention of the rupture between himself and Gray. Probably he hoped to make his peace with his old friend when he rejoined him and their new friends in Venice. This hope, however, was frustrated, perhaps by the sudden severe illness which delayed his departure. Either from an instinctive distrust of the local practitioners or from a half-childish reluctance to own that he was ill, he persisted in doctoring himself until, upon the verge of collapse, he had perforce to send in haste for Joseph Spence. What followed the worthy Professor of Poetry may be allowed to relate in his own words:

About three or four in the morning I was surprised with a message saying that Mr Walpole was very much worse, and desired to see me. I went and found him scarce able to speak. I soon learned from his servant that he had been all the while without a physician, so I immediately sent for the best aid that the place would afford, and despatched a messenger to the minister at Florence desiring him to send my friend Dr Cocchi. In about twenty-four hours I had the satisfaction to find Mr Walpole better. We left him in a fair way of recovery, and we hope to see him next week at Venice.

Before quitting Reggio Walpole had written to Mann, "I will not mention any more the affair that has happened", and his attitude to all the friends whom he and Gray possessed in common seems to have been one of admirable restraint. If—as it would appear—Gray was still at Venice when Walpole rejoined Lord Lincoln and Joseph Spence there in June, the position of the Chuteheds must have been a little difficult.

In the *Short Notes* Walpole records that he spent a month at Venice with Lincoln and Spence. From the few letters belonging to this period which have survived, he does not seem to have enjoyed his Venetian experiences greatly. Probably he missed Gray more than he would have owned either to himself or to any one else. The gaiety of his letters to Mann rings a little false, even when he characteristically proposes that his new dog Patapan should be "naturalised and created a peer by the title of Viscount Callington". Upon May 14 the voters of the Cornish borough of that name had elected young Mr Walpole to represent them in Parliament, but as the House was not due to reassemble until the month of November at the earliest, the new member did not think it necessary to hasten the wheels of his homeward chariot. The *Short Notes* tell us that he returned with Lincoln and Spence by sea from Genoa to Antibes, and travelled with them as far as Paris. It was not until September 12, 1741, O S, that he landed at Dover, his mind overflowing with Italian memories, his trunks well stuffed with busts and medals, and Patapan under his arm.

When Horace Walpole reached London he found the fortunes of his father's party ebbing apace, and his father visibly shaken in health. Seven years earlier

Caroline of Anspach had spoken of Sir Robert as "that poor man, *avec ce gros corps, ces jambes enflées, et ce vilain ventre*", and all his hard physical exercise had not availed to avert—but only to retard—the final penalties of the flesh

Neither family nor political portents disconcerted Mr Walpole perceptibly at first, however. He was "up to his ears in dirt, straw, and unpacking"

"The Parliament", he writes to Mann, "does not meet till the first of December, which relieves me into a little happiness and gives me a little time to settle myself. I am now only in a fright about my birthday clothes which I bespoke in Paris, Friday is the day, and this is Monday without any news of them"

It is a relief to know that the tardy garments arrived in the nick of time

On the less frivolous side he was not slow to give Sir Robert the benefit of his new-fledged virtuosity, and he was soon bestirring himself to procure through the complaisant Mann a Domenichino and a Correggio for the collection at Houghton. Yet notwithstanding these varied interests and pursuits, the young man was at this time restless, vacillating, perhaps rather lonely, in spirit. To Conway he writes, towards the end of the year

impatience to see a few friends has drawn me out of Italy, and Italy, Harry, is pleasanter than London. As I do not love living *en famille* as much as you (but then indeed my family is not like yours) I am hurried about getting myself a house, for I have so long lived single, I do not much take to being confined with my own family

You won't find me much altered, I believe, at least outwardly. I am not grown a bit shorter, or a bit fatter, but am just the same long lean creature as usual. . . . What

inward alterations may have happened to me you will discover best, for you know 'tis said one never knows that oneself I will answer, that that part that belongs to you has not suffered the least change—I took care of that

The "family" in whose society Horace Walpole found so little delight did, indeed, present a very striking contrast to that of the happy, well-behaved and mutually-appreciative Conways. Sir Robert, on the verge both of a physical and a political *dégringolade*, looms largest in the landscape, whether the background be Houghton or Whitehall His eldest son, Robert, a rather shadowy, dissolute figure, was living apart from his preposterous wife, and seeking solace in company the reverse of edifying, his elder daughter, Mary, Countess of Cholmondeley, being dead, the feminine element was represented by a second Mary, Maria Skerrett's daughter To her, more than to any other member of the group, Horace seems to have felt himself drawn, and she was indeed a modest, unassuming and inoffensive person But here he found himself headed off by Edward Walpole, the comely, irascible, 'cello-playing Edward, recognised as Sir Robert's favourite, and jealous of any possible pretender near his throne Small wonder that upon his return from Italy young Mr Walpole should have been hurried about getting himself a house! And yet the months slipped by, and he remained under Sir Robert's roof, either in Norfolk or in London

The Parliament to which Callington had elected the Whig Premier's son did not actually assemble till the last month of the year 1741 With Horace Walpole's career as a legislator and a politician we are not greatly concerned here, except in so far as it coloured his

literary activities "About politics, in the high sense of the word," remarks Macaulay severely, "he knew nothing and cared nothing", and it may well be that the same critic is not over-severe when he accuses him of keeping his Whiggism, "as he kept the old spears and helmets at Strawberry Hill, merely for show" Yet, despite many pre-occupations, he was tolerably regular in his attendances at St Stephen's for twenty-six years There, from his chosen perch under one of the round-headed, square-paned, colourless windows, he watched, with amused and frequently malicious eyes, the political tragi-comedy enacted by the bewigged mummers beneath the great brazen chandelier For personal as well as for political reasons, his first session was probably the most distressful in his whole parliamentary career The Opposition, it is true, was a singularly incohesive and ill-disciplined body, composed of the irreconcilable Jacobites, the die-hard Tories, "the Prince of Wales' group", and those anti-Walpolian Whigs who rallied round the banner of Pulteney But that preposterous mountebank, the Duke of Newcastle, and his Pelham cohorts formed within the Whig party itself a *bloc* upon which it was inevitable that the Walpolians should stumble and fall

None the less, the parliamentary horizon was not wholly overcast when it was first scanned by the new member for Callington His party began the session with a majority of forty—"a vast number for the outset" The "vast number" dwindled promptly to the exiguous one of seven, in a debate upon a Cornish election petition, and Mr Walpole then unburdens himself to Mr Mann in this rather disquieted, though hectically facetious, strain

I look upon it now that the question is Downing Street or the Tower, will you come and see a body, if one should happen to lodge at the latter? There are a thousand pretty things to amuse you, the lions, the armoury, the crown, King Harry's cod-piece, and the axe that beheaded Anna Bullen. If I die there, and have my body thrown into a wood, I am too old to be buried by Robin Redbreasts, am not I?

The Opposition was steadily gathering force and momentum, and, though Sir Robert was "still sanguine", his youngest son soon perceived with how little cause. When the House reassembled after Christmas, the "vast number" of forty had shrunk to the almost imperceptible number of three. In January it was converted into a hostile majority of sixteen. Then at last, urged thereto by his sons—Horace among them—his brother and his friends, the Prime Minister tendered his resignation. Early in February the earldom of Orford crowned a not inglorious career, and Maria Skerrett's daughter received the courtesy rank of the daughter of an earl.

The unrelenting pursuit of Lord Orford by Pulteney was, in the ensuing month, the occasion of the Honourable Horace Walpole's maiden speech in Parliament. In the debate upon the motion that a select Committee be set up to inquire into the last ten years of Sir Robert's administration, the member for Callington so far overcame his natural shyness as to address the House. As he was careful to send a copy of his speech to dear "Miny" we remain in no uncertainty as to the actual terms in which he expressed himself, and cannot ascribe their colourlessness and tepidity to the malice of some Tory gazetteer.

The House, however, listened good-naturedly to

the diffident little discourse, and William Pitt, the "terrible cornet of horse", contrived to pay the speaker a compliment and to further the case against his father in one breath "If", he said, "it was becoming in young Walpole to remember that he was the child of the accused, the House ought not to forget that they were the children of their country" The House demonstrated its sense of that profound truth by carrying the motion with a majority of seven

Horace Walpole took—or affected to take—his father's fall from power *en philosophe* "Trust me," he had written to Mann, when the storm was brewing, "if we fall, all the grandeur, the envied grandeur, of our house will cost me not a sigh, it has given me no pleasure while we have it, and will give me no pain when I part with it" That neither political vicissitudes nor imperfect family affinities had the power to quench his gaiety at this time is clear from the closing sentences of the very letter in which he sends Mann the text of his maiden speech

Good night, my dear child I am just going out to the ridotto One hates those places, comes away out of humour, and yet one goes again

For masquerades he had really lost none of his old enthusiasm, "one of my ancient passions" he called it thirty years later, and he showed a fine catholicity of taste in his choice of costume To one such revel he went in the garb of Aurungzebe, to another he betook himself dressed like an old woman, when he demurely whispered to the irrepressible old General Churchill that he was quite ashamed of being there till he met him, but was comforted with finding one person in the room older than himself

The Quadruple Alliance, partially dissolved by Walpole's quarrel with Gray, was broken for the first time by death when the "ineffectual angel", Richard West, gave up the ghost at Hatfield, in June 1742. We might have known more about the reactions of this event upon Walpole's mind had Henry Conway succeeded in his good-natured attempt to reconcile Gray and his cousin on the occasion of the death of the poet's singularly unsatisfactory father a year earlier. In July Mann received from Downing Street two "copies of verses", an elegy *On the Death of Richard West, Esquire*, and a squib evoked by the rumour that Horatio Walpole of Wolterton had been raised to the peerage. "The former copy", writes Walpole, "I think you will like; it was written by one Mr. Ashton on Mr. West, two friends of mine whom you have often heard me mention." Later in the month of July he sent to Florence an acidulous little skit entitled *The Lesson for the Day*.¹ Lest posterity should imagine that he had either desired or contrived that it should be published, Walpole is careful to record in his *Short Notes* that "Mr. Coke, son of Lord Lovel, coming in while I was writing it, took a copy and dispersed it till it got into print, but with many additions", and he adds, not without complacency, that it was "the original of a great number of things of that sort". The comic force of these biblical pastiches began to diminish almost at once, but this pioneer effort is amusing enough, and no doubt Mann and the Chuteheds were enchanted. It begins

¹ Another, and slightly different, version of the *Lesson* exists in Walpole's handwriting, jotted on the blank leaf of a letter from Henry Pelham.

(1) Now these are the Generations of Them that sought preferment

(2) Twenty years they sought preferment and found it not, yea, twenty years they wandered in the wilderness

(3) Twenty years they sought them places, but they found no resting-place for the sole of their foot

(4) And lo! it came to pass in the days of George the King that these men said, Go to, let us make ourselves places

(5) And they took a man named William, and they made him King over them, and he made them places

"The man named William" was the unpardonable Pulteney, in that year created Earl of Bath, and the remaining twelve verses of the *Lesson* chronicle the various appointments distributed by him among the anti-Walpolian cohorts after Sir Robert's downfall

During the summer of 1742 Almanzor Ashton was a guest at Downing Street. He had newly taken Holy Orders, and he cadged perseveringly for a Crown living until in July his former schoolfellow obtained him that of Aldingham. It may have been Almanzor's company and conversation which turned Celadon's mind at that time towards the biblical parody and the mock sermon as vehicles for propaganda. Floating recollections of Henry Coventry may also have furnished some raw material. At all events, his next *jeu d'esprit* was *A Sermon on Painting*, which Lord Orford's domestic chaplain actually preached before his noble patron at Houghton.

Until a new town house could be found for his lordship, the whole family and their belongings, after a brief sojourn at Chelsea, were transferred bodily to Norfolk. "I am writing to you up to my ears in packing," Horace Walpole tells Mann on July 14, and he

adds a characteristically whimsical little sketch of himself and his four-legged familiars

I look like St John in the Isle of Patmos, writing revelations and prophesying "Woe! woe! woe! The kingdom of desolation is at hand"! Indeed I have prettier animals about me than he ever dreamt of, here is dear Patapan and a little Vandyke cat with black whiskers and boots, you would swear it was of a very ancient family in the west of England, famous for their loyalty

Walpole viewed the prospect of a sojourn in Norfolk with undisguised consternation "I beg", he urges Mann, "that you will write constantly to me, it will be my only entertainment, for I neither hunt, brew, drink nor reap" And from Houghton itself he was fain to send to Florence despatches stuffed with copies of the anti-Pulteneyite doggerel of Edgcumbe and Hanbury Williams "You must take them as the plump part of a long letter," he tells Mann "Consider, I am in the barren land of Norfolk, where news grows more slowly than anything green, and, besides, I am in the house of a fallen minister"

It was at this time, and in this environment, that *A Sermon on Painting* was written

The text of the sermon is taken from the hundred and fifteenth Psalm, "They have Mouths, but they speak not, Eyes have they, but they see not, neither is there any breath in their nostrils", and its ostensible theme is "modern idolatry" as exemplified in "the pictures of the Romish Church" Mr Walpole, still resentful of "superstition's papal gloom", borrows a fresh heap of faggots from Conyers Middleton and consigns to the flames, not, indeed, the pictures themselves—he is no Savonarola—nor even "the poor

vulgar” who bow down before them, but “those ministers of idolatry who, calling themselves the servants of the living God, transfer his service to inanimate images” Very obligingly he sets forth some hints for the guidance of these deluded Levites, showing them how they might “lead the poor unpractised soul through the paths of religion, and by familiar images mould his ductile imagination to a knowledge of his maker”, and illustrating his various contentions with the aid of sacred pictures in Lord Orford’s collection. A poem, he observes, not without truth, “is almost confined to the nation where it was written. But Painting is a language every eye can read, the pictured passions speak the tongue of every country”, and he adds, with rising enthusiasm

The continence of Scipio shines with all its lustre when told by the hand of a Poussin, while all the imagination of the poet or eloquence of the historian can cast no beauty on the virtuous act in the eye of an illiterate reader

When such benefits flow from this glorious art, how impious it is to corrupt its uses, and to employ the noblest science to the mercenary purpose of priestly ambition

Up to this point the “preacher” has dealt chiefly with the ethics of sacred art, but in all his early writings politics “keep breaking in”, and we are not long suffered to forget that the sermon is being delivered “in the house of a fallen minister”, and he a pillar of the Hanoverian dynasty

This is indeed not one of the least merits of this, I may say, heavenly art—its power to preserve the form of a departed friend, or dear relation dead! To show how severely just looked the good legislator! how awfully serene the humane, the true patriot! It shows us with what fire, what love of mankind, WILLIAM flew to save

religion and liberty! It expresses how honest, how benign, the line of HANOVER

No doubt the "preacher" was quite unconscious of the ironic fact that he himself was offering garlands to gods as incongruous and as uncouth as any before whom "the poor vulgar" ever bent the knee. The idolater condemning idolatry is, naturally, full of zeal "One really knows not how to account for the prevalence of this sin!" And, a little later, he exclaims

View but the tabernacle of the saint in vogue! How offerings pour in! How great is one's surprise, on coming to inquire into the merits that are the foundation of this universe!

A morose Carthusian or bloody Dominican are invested with robes of glory while a Curtius or a Cocles are left to the chance of fame which a private pencil can bestow upon them!

But it is not necessary to dive into profane history for examples of unregarded merit

Obviously not Lord Orford, who must at once have recognised his own rubicund lineaments under the Roman casques of Curtius and Cocles, now enjoyed the exquisite sensation of hearing his character and his career compared, point by point, with those of "the great Moses himself, the law-giver, the defender, the preserver of Israel"! The analogies are, indeed, striking "Examine but the life of that slighted patriot", and they will leap to view. For example, Moses "saved his countrymen from the hand of tyranny and from the dominion of an idolatrous king", and Lord Orford ranged himself on the winning side when George in pudding-time came o'er. Contemplate Moses and his followers "in the barren desert, where sands and wilds overspread the dreary

scene, where no hopes of moisture, no prospect of undiscovered springs, could flatter their parching thirst” Mark what followed In the words of Abraham Cowley

He struck the rock, and strait the waters flow’d

Then turn to the not less wild and sandy desert of Norfolk, and behold the ornamental waters, the conduits, the fish-ponds, called into being by the more than mortal genius of Robert, first Earl of Orford!

Regarded as literature, the *Sermon on Painting* is of no account Its interest is entirely psychological and historical In the stilted, pseudo-scriptural diction there may, perhaps, live some lingering echoes of Henry Coventry’s conversation, and the bible-readings in Cambridge gaol That Horace Walpole should have embraced this means of airing his anti-Popish sentiments, his admiration for the honesty and benignity of the House of Hanover, his fire-new familiarity with Italian art, and his loyalty to his father in the hour of eclipse, is hardly surprising, but that he could—and did—sustain from first to last a pompous and insufferable seriousness of both mood and manner would be comprehensible only if his sense of humour had been a plant of feeble and tardy growth

Any affection which young Mr Walpole had learnt to feel for Houghton in his undergraduate days now evaporated with speed Time hung heavy on his hands It was, as he wrote to Mann, “very unpleasant

to be prisoner in a melancholy, barren province, which would put one in mind of the deluge, only that we have no water” The mornings he spent chiefly in the library, with only “his Patapanic majesty” for

company, then until dusk, he had to walk, with the other members of the shrunken house-party, in the somewhat bleak pleasaunces where the trees were still too young to crowd into a shade—and walking, as he remarked ruefully in after years, was never one of his excellences

This temporary banishment came to an end when Parliament reassembled in November. In that month Lord Orford moved into the red brick house on the east side of Arlington Street upon whose dusky wall a commemorative disc now bears his name in both its earlier and its later form. It is a rather diminutive house, outwardly demure. Within, it has a grey-flagged hall, a narrow, sharply-curving staircase under a pallid oval sky-light, and certain unmodernised rooms with low ceilings, chequered windows, and panelled walls. No lover of the less robust and colourful aspect of eighteenth-century literature could pass that house without a lingering glance if he remembered at the moment that here for thirty-seven years was the London home of Horace Walpole.

The beginning of the year 1743 found him installed there, surrounded by all his "baubles and Patapans and cats", cheered by signs of a reaction in his father's favour, but otherwise a prey to ennui. "We are in such a state of sameness", he tells Mann, "that I shall begin to wonder at the change in the seasons, and to talk of the Spring as a strange accident", and he was disconcerted rather than charmed by the amiable constancy of the Countess Grifoni. "Alas! I owe her two letters, but where to find a *beau sentiment* I cannot tell! I believe I may have some by me in an old chest of drawers, with some exploded red-heel

shoes and full-bottom wigs, but they would come out so yellow and moth-eaten!” he ruefully exclaims

The “state of sameness” was soon broken by the news of an Austrian victory over the Spaniards, news which drew forth the typically “Horatian” remark, “We talk of this battle as of a comet, have you heard of *the* battle? it is so strange a thing that numbers imagine you may go and see it at Charing Cross” There is also evidence in the letters of this period that an odd sort of camaraderie was growing up between the writer and his father We catch glimpses of “Sir Robert” or “my lord”, as he is indifferently called, making much of Patapan, sharing Horace’s impatience for the arrival of “the Dominichin” purchased by Mann at the Zambecari sale, and vaguely planning a tour through Italy with his youngest son as his guide

It was upon August 20 of this year that the famous and oft-quoted description of country-house existence in Norfolk was penned, in a letter to John Chute Nothing could be more characteristic than its whimsical and conscious petulance and exaggeration, and the prose has the true “Horatian” cadence, easy, pleasant, conversational

Indeed, my dear Sir, you certainly did not use to be stupid, and till you give me more substantial proof that you are so, I shall not believe it As for your temperate diet and milk bringing about such a metamorphosis, I hold it impossible I have such lamentable proofs every day before my eyes of the stupefying qualities of beef, ale, and wine, that I have contracted a most religious veneration for your spiritual nouriture Only imagine that I here every day see men who are mountains of roast beef, and only seem just roughly hewn out into the outlines of human form, like the giant rock at Pratolino! I shudder when I see them brandish their knives in act to carve, and look on

them as savages that devour one another I should not stare at all more than I do, if yonder Alderman at the lower end of the table was to stick his fork into his neighbour's jolly cheek, and cut a brave slice of brown and fat

Oh, my dear Sir, don't you find that nine parts in ten of the world are of no use but to make you wish yourself with that tenth part? I am so far from growing used to mankind by living amongst them, that my natural ferocity and wildness does but every day grow worse They tire me, they fatigue me, I don't know what to do with them, I don't know what to say to them, I fling open the windows and fancy I want air, and when I get by myself, I undress myself, and seem to have had people in my pockets, in my platts, and on my shoulders I indeed find this fatigue worse in the country than in town, because one can avoid it there and has more resources, but it is there too I fear 'tis growing old, but I literally seem to have murdered a man whose name was Ennuï, for his ghost is ever before me

From the tenour of this epistle it would seem as though the writer had made no very determined efforts to grapple with the ghost, and as though the greater part of his time were spent either groaning inwardly in the company of "un-idea'd" Norfolk squires or groaning audibly at the recollection of it Actually he was engaged in compiling a very full and elaborate catalogue of the art treasures of Houghton, the *Ædes Walpolianæ*, the title and plan of which were probably suggested by the *Ædes Barberinæ* The dedication of this work to Lord Orford is dated "August 24, 1743", three weeks later the obsequious Whaley had heard of its existence, but it was not published "in form" till the year 1747, the memorable year that witnessed the purchase of Strawberry Hill

It is interesting to compare the text and the tone of the *Ædes Walpolianæ* with those of the *Description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill*,

written more than thirty years later, and to observe with what conscious pride the Houghton Catalogue is unrolled, with what artless delight the "baubles" of the villa are passed in review. The scribe of 1774 may be the more engaging person of the two, but there is a certain *navet  * about him of 1743, despite the seriousness of his youthful dogmatism, otherwise he could hardly have closed his dedicatory epistle in this extraordinary strain

Could those virtuous men, your father and grandfather, arise from yonder church, how would they be amazed to see this noble edifice and spacious plantations where once stood their plain homely dwelling! How would they be satisfied to find only the mansion-house, not the morals of the family altered! May it be long, Sir, ere you join them! And oh! as you wear no stain from them, may you receive no disgrace from

Your dutiful and affectionate son

HORACE WALPOLE.

In the general Introduction the author sets forth his views upon art in considerable detail, and with an occasional and refreshing lightness of touch. Paradoxically enough, he delights in twitting those insufferable fellows, "the virtuosi", with their affectation, their ignorance, and their vanity. He complacently refutes their allegation that "the antients knew little or nothing of perspective" by citing certain "very fine pieces of painting dug out of the newly-discovered underground town at Portici, near Naples". But of contemporary art he takes a gloomy view. "There seems", he observes, "to be a stop to any further improvement", and he will accord the name of "artist" only to Rosalba and Zink.

According to Horace Walpole, the art of painting which had "expired about the year 580", revived "in

the person of Cimabue", but, alas! his "performances" and those of his immediate successors "are only curious for their antiquity, not for their excellence" The birth of Mantegna heralded the dawn—so curiously identified by modern criticism with the sunset—of Italian art, and the splendour of noon came with such masters as Guido Reni and Salvator Rosa, Correggio and Caracci Michaelangelo is rebuked because he "followed nature too closely" and was "much too fond of muscles", but, on the other hand, Parmegiano is extolled for "the majesty of his airs" A word of praise is conceded to that "universal genius, Lionardo da Vinci", though of the Florentine school we are told that "their drawing was hard, and their colouring gaudy and gothic". The disdainful conjunction of these two epithets is exquisite

In the closing passage, after a modest meed of praise has been accorded to the French and Flemish schools, and Dominichino has been unexpectedly chidden for his "raw colouring" and "faulty chiara oscuro", the author tells us, what we have long since divined, that, in his opinion, "all the qualities of a perfect painter never met but in Raphael, Guido, and Annibal Caracci" Then comes the actual catalogue of the Houghton treasures, and we follow our guide with flagging footsteps from the Embroidered Bed Chamber to the Supping Parlour, from the Gallery to the Hunting Hall We are not spared the exact dimensions of each room, and of every picture in it we are constrained to contemplate chimney-pieces of black and gold, panels of "yellow cassoy", bed-hangings of "Indian needle-work", until "the sense faints picturing them" It was not necessary for

Walpole to read Chinese history in order to understand the cult of the ancestor

"In the house of a fallen minister" it was inevitable that politics should take precedence over the fine arts as a theme for meditation and debate, nor could young Mr Walpole avert his mind's eye very long from the hated image of the Earl of Bath. In June 1743, presumably while collecting and arranging the materials for the *Ædes*, he had contributed to an impudent little Whig organ, *Old England or the Constitutional Journal*, "a parody of some scenes in *Macbeth*, called *The Dear Witches*—a ridicule of the new ministry" In October of the same year another anti-Pulteneyite political skit appeared in the same quarter, and from the same noble pen

In London the summer of 1743 had been enlivened by the famous revolt of the Drury Lane players, including Garrick, Macklin, Mrs Pritchard, and Kitty Clive, against the manager of the theatre, the crafty and elusive Fleetwood. Walpole makes adroit use of this topical theme to introduce his satire, and peculiar point is given to the first paragraph by its allusion to his future crony "the Clive" as "that second Queen of Hungary", making a brave stand for "theatric Liberty". It is clear that the dilatory and ineffectual proceedings of the English troops on the Rhine were causing the satirist more pleasure as an anti-Pulteneyite than pain as an Englishman. It was Pulteney's army, and not "my lord's", that was giving so poor an account of itself, and he exclaims ironically—

Blest be the Heroes who give Politicians time to stir their Coffee, and weigh their Exploits at Leisure, without heaping Battle on Battle and Siege on Siege! . . . They do

not lump half a Dozen Victories as that hasty Fellow, the Duke of Marlborough, did. Before a grave Citizen had trac'd out Schellenbergh in the Map, he was confounded with the Victory of Blenheim.

The main body of the *Old England* skit consists of an imaginary interview between Steele and a tatterdemalion group of Irish players newly arrived from Dublin "to 'list under Sir Richard". Not the idea alone, but the form and fabric, are unblushingly borrowed from the recruiting scene in *2 Henry IV*, and the implication seems to be that somewhat after this fashion did the seceding Whigs seek service with Lord Bath. Poney, the leader of the Irish volunteers, passes his troupe in review, and we are introduced to John Limekiln, who "shone particularly in the Whisper, where the fellow tells Macbeth he hath dispatch'd Banquo", Simon Shadow, a linen-draper turned actor, whose chief merit was that he "us'd to swear Mr Poney spoke like an Angel", Mr Hill, who could undertake any part that did not "require Speaking"; and Bullcalf, "a young Beginner", who, having performed no rôle but that of the monster in *Perseus and Andromeda*, was capable only of wordless roars. Mr Poney, being requested to give a taste of his quality, can recite nothing but passages from Almanzor's part in *The Conquest of Granada*, though prompted by the impresario with cues from *Cato*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *Tamerlane*. The composition ends lightly, if somewhat irrelevantly, with an anecdote of a painter whose sole idea of a subject for a large picture in a hall, a small one for a chimney-piece, or a "gay little history" for the ceiling of a summer-house, was the Judgment of Solomon.

By the time that this number of *Old England* appeared, Horace Walpole's summer exile had ended, and he was back again in town. Halting at Newmarket on his way thither, he wrote enthusiastically to Mann, "Were I a physician, I would prescribe nothing but *recipe ccclxx drachm Londin*", and it is clear that he was delighted to find himself once more in Arlington Street, with his Patapans and his cats. Patapan looms large in the correspondence of 1743. Chute, still lingering at the Casa Manetti, composed in his honour an imitation of the 110th epigram of the first Book of Martial, and Patapan's master was charmed.

My dear Sir, your translation shall stand foremost in the Patapaniana. I hope in time to have poems upon him, and sayings of his own, enough to make a notable book.

Among the "poems upon him" was one from Walpole's own hand, *Patapan or the Little White Dog*, imitated from La Fontaine, but, as the *Short Notes* inform us, it was never published.

CHAPTER IV

THE '45—RECONCILIATION WITH GRAY—PAPERS IN
DODSLEY'S "MUSIUM"

IN November 1743 Parliament reassembled, and the ire of the Member for Callington was kindled first by a motion against the further employment of the Hanoverian troops then actually in British pay, and secondly by the elevation of Sandys to the peerage. What he described as the first-fruits of his indignation at the latter event was a set of *Verses addressed to the House of Lords on its receiving a new peer*. The elisions are now less frequent, and the cæsura, instead of haunting the second beat, is occasionally pushed back to the first or forward to the third. Personal pique lends to this composition a pithiness which no merely theoretical objection to Romish "idolatry" had ever lent to Walpole's earlier verse, but the energy of the ten opening lines has spent itself long before the thirty-fifth and last is reached. Those ten may be quoted here, mere Pope-and-water though they be

Thou senseless Hall, whose injudicious space
Like Death, confounds a various mismatch'd race,
Where kings and clowns, th' ambitious and the mean,
Compose th' inactive, soporific scene,
Unfold thy doors!—and a promotion see
That must amaze e'vn prostituted thee!

Shall not thy sons, incurious as they are,
Raise their dull lids and meditate a stare?
Thy sons who sleep in monumental state
To show the spot where their great fathers sate

The question of the Hanoverian troops, the significance of the movements of the Brest and Toulon squadrons, and the Treaty of Worms, combined to convince Horace Walpole that the first session of 1744 was "like to turn out as laborious a session as ever was" Nor did the event belie the prediction Charles Edward had reached Paris on January 20th, and a descent by the French upon Ireland seemed imminent. His plans were the subject of much uneasy speculation in London, more especially when it became known that an army under Marshal Saxe was getting ready for embarkation And now this menace to the House of Hanover roused the old lion in Lord Orford "His zeal, his courage, his attention, are indefatigable and inconceivable," writes his son But the blow was not fated to fall till the year following, nor was he fated to see it fall, falter and glance aside The squadron which was to have convoyed Saxe's transports to the Kentish coast was driven off by the British Fleet, the transports themselves were dispersed by a storm, the fifteen thousand troops they carried were compelled to disembark, and Charles Edward was kept fretting his heart out in Paris, while anti-Jacobite London breathed again

As soon as it became manifest that all immediate peril was averted, Lord Orford's energies sagged and sank low Meanwhile the vogue for tar-water and the demise of Mr Pope provided the fashionable world with some topics of conversation less distressful than

the declaration of war by England and Holland against France, and the proceedings of the Pretenders, *père et fils*

Always easily alarmed and as easily diverted from alarms, Horace at one moment imagines himself and his family as "refugee heretics" at Florence, and the next is telling Conway, "every night I go constantly to Ranelagh, which has totally beat Vauxhall Nobody goes anywhere else—everybody goes there My lord Chesterfield is so fond of it that he says he has ordered all his letters to be directed thither "

In the early summer of 1744 he "made a great antique purchase of all Dr Middleton's collection which he brought from Italy"—a purchase which he had deferred until the Doctor's *Germana quaedam Antiquitatis eruditae Monumenta* should be at least half printed, "for fear of an *è museo Walpoliano*" Apprehensions of this kind had ceased to beset him when Middleton's spoils had reposed for a year or two at Strawberry Hill

Lord Oxford's health, shaken by a chill caught when fishing with the stalwart Princess Emily at New Park in the month of May, continued to decline through the summer months, though in July "my lord" was sending cheerful accounts of himself from Houghton to his youngest son He thanks "dear Horace" for the news he had sent him of the busy world, and adds, a little satirically, "I must be in your debt from hence, where nothing occurs worthy of a fine Gentleman " None the less, he hints that he would be glad if the young man could persuade himself to "sacrifice the Joys of the *Beau Monde* to ye amusements of a dull rurall life", and exchange Arlington Street for Houghton.

In his famous—indeed, almost too famous—review of Lord Dover's edition of the *Letters to Mann*, Macaulay observes of Conway that he was the only friend to whom Walpole "appears to have been sincerely attached" In many letters which Macaulay did not live to see published there is much that might have caused him to modify that sweeping observation, but it cannot be denied that Walpole's attachment to his cousin had something of the blind and solemn fervour of a cult During the summer of 1744 the younger man was able to offer very convincing proofs of his sincerity, when Conway actually condescended to write him a "letter of confidence", asking his advice upon a decidedly difficult subject It seems that "dearest Harry" had fallen—or half-fallen—in love with Lady Caroline Fitzroy, and of the various obstacles between them not the least formidable was the smallness of his revenues, and the fact that these had recently shrunk still further His cousin was obviously flattered—not to say fluttered To the request for advice he was reluctant to respond, but it gave him an opportunity which he declares he had long wanted "Nothing", he says, "could prevent my being unhappy at the smallness of your fortune, but its throwing it into my way to offer you to share mine" The offer is made in terms of transparent sincerity, in a letter which contains as many flashes of self-revelation and—it may be added—of self-knowledge as any that Walpole ever wrote Of his own income of "near two thousand pounds a year", he writes

I have always flung it away all in the most idle manner, but, my dear Harry, idle as I am, and thoughtless, I have sense enough to have real pleasure in denying myself

baubles, and in saving a very good income to make a man happy for whom I have a just esteem and most sincere friendship I must talk of myself to prove to you that it will be right for you to accept it. I am sensible of having more follies and weaknesses, and fewer real good qualities than most men. I sometimes reflect on this, though I own, too seldom. I always want to begin acting like a man, and a sensible one, which I think I might be if I would. Can I begin better than by taking care of my fortune for one I love? You have seen (I have seen you have) that I am fickle, and foolishly fond of twenty new people, but I don't really love them—I have always loved you constantly.

If I ever felt much for anything (which I know may be questioned) it was certainly for my mother. I look on you as my nearest relation by her.

Conway did not accept the offer thus earnestly pressed upon him, nor did he wed Lady Caroline, fate having in store for him an altogether delightful wife in the widowed Lady Ailsbury.

A certain restlessness and a nervous dissatisfaction with his environment are discernible in Walpole's letters about this time. After assuring Mann that he "will be civil" to the Abbé Durazzo, "a little, pett, *petit-maitre* figure", who had claimed acquaintance with him on the strength of some casual Florentine encounter, he explains, "I never lose opportunities of paving myself an agreeable passage back to Florence" and he adds, only half in jest, "My dear Chutes, stay for me, I think the first gale of peace will carry me to you." By the middle of August he was on the wing, not for Florence but for Norfolk, travelling, as was his wont, with a minimum of luggage, and with no companions but Patapan and a couple of books. The late summer was rendered more tolerable at Houghton by a brief visit from Dr. Conyers Middleton.

Another visitor to Houghton about this time was Mr Richard Rigby, destined in the following year to succeed old General Churchill in the representation of Castle Rising

"I believe he will do extremely well here," Walpole writes to Charles Hanbury Williams, "for he talks all the language of turneps and foxhounds, only with an accent a little too distinct, but he will soon grow more inarticulate, and consequently more understood"

By the end of October Horace was back in London, with little to show for his two months' exile beyond a parody of a scene in Corneille's *Cinna* introducing Pelham, Arundel, and Selwyn

Granville's resignation in November gave rise to a rumour of Lord Orford's imminent return to power, and, much to his son's malicious amusement, various hopeful place-hunters, including three prelates, hastened to Arlington Street to pay their respects to "my lord" But "my lord" was a dying man Reluctant to face this fact, Horace reminded himself and his Florentine friends that it was "common for people to live many years in his situation" At the moment the political position was sufficiently intriguing, and the theatrical war still raged at Drury Lane, where the anti-Fleetwood riots seem to have interested Walpole fully as much as the comings and goings at Westminster and Whitehall He sends Mann a gleeful account of his own unpremeditated intervention in one uproarious episode In order to intimidate the audience and suppress demonstrations against the management, Fleetwood had hired a gang of "Bear-garden bruisers", who filled the stage, "armed with bludgeons and clubs" Whereupon the indignant audience

raised the greatest uproar, and amongst the rest, who flew into a passion but your friend the philosopher? In short, one of the actors advancing to the front of the stage to make an apology for the manager, he had scarce begun to say, "Mr Fleetwood"—when your friend with a most audible voice and dignity of anger, called out, "He is an impudent rascal!" The whole pit huzzaed, and repeated the words "Only think of my being a popular orator!" But what was still better, while my shadow of a person was dilating to the consistence of a hero, one of the chiefingleaders of the riot, coming under the box where I sat and pulling off his hat, said, "Mr W, what would you please to have us do next?"

"Mr W" was not of that stuff of which popular orators are made. Disconcerted and abashed, he confesses that he "sunk down into the box", and that ten days later he had not mustered sufficient courage to set foot in the playhouse again. "In short," he concludes, half-ruefully, "the whole town has been entertained by my prowess, and Mr Conway has given me the nickname of Wat Tyler."

At the close of February 1745 it seemed as though "the struggles of his own good temperament" might save Lord Orford from immediate danger of dissolution. Walpole relates that during that month he himself was "out but twice", and that he had been in constant attendance on his father "or obliged to see multitudes of people" but when, early in March, it became evident that all hopes were vain, he was "forced to go out and thank those that had come and sent". The end came on March 18th, but not until nearly four weeks later did he feel disposed to write in any detail of the event. His first letter to Mann—dated March 29th—opens with the appeal, "Don't expect me to enter at all upon the subject", and is

chiefly concerned, for the rest, with gossip about Sandys and Granville, Mr Pitt and my Lord Coke, the dullness of Thomson and Glover, and the "present fashion" of making conundrums. By the 15th of April he had composed his spirits and collected his thoughts sufficiently to set about the writing of a formal panegyric, obviously planned with care, and transcribed from a draft.

However irreparable his personal loss may be to his friends, he certainly died critically well for himself: he had lived to stand the rudest trials with honour, to see his character universally cleared, his enemies brought to infamy for their ignorance or villainy, and the world allowing him to be the only man in England fit to be what he had been, and he died at a time when his age and infirmities prevented his again undertaking the support of a government which engrossed his whole care, and which he foresaw was falling into the last confusion. In this I hope his judgement failed! His fortune attended him to the last, for he died of the most painful of distempers with little or no pain.

All very "becoming in young Walpole", as Pitt might have said, but not all in strict accordance with historic truth!

Lord Orford died a comparatively poor man, leaving an estate much encumbered by debt, and having by "his fondness for Houghton—endangered Houghton" "He left me", Walpole records in the *Short Notes*, "the house in Arlington Street in which he died, 5000*l* in money and 1000*l* a year from the Collector's place in the Custom House, and the surplus to be divided between my brother Edward and me." Actually it was the lease, and not the freehold, of the Arlington Street house which formed part of the

legacy, and it was the expiration of the lease in 1779 which compelled Walpole to move to 11 Berkeley Square

Mindful of favours past, and perhaps not unhopeful of further favours to come, Ashton proceeded to compose upon Lord Orford's death "a fine piece", which was duly "printed in the public papers" He does not appear to have risen to the occasion, however, when four weeks later his friend was again bereaved—this time by the loss of Patapan The early summer of this year was, indeed, rendered distressful to Walpole in divers ways, by the death of a brother of George Montagu's, and also of a brother of "poor Mr Chute's", and by the disconcerting news of the English defeat at Fontenoy, as well as by the demise of the silver-fleeced Patapan It was in May that the long-threatened storm broke between his brother Edward and himself Nominally the cause of their clash was a difference of opinion about the "family borough" of Castle Rising Horace had put forward his friend Richard Rigby as a candidate, with the approval of the new Earl of Orford, and for some obscure reason this proceeding kindled the wrath of Edward, who developed his views in a letter of extraordinary vehemence, in the course of which he informed his youngest brother that it was the most painful thing in the world to have any commerce with him, and accused him of assuming a pre-eminence from an imaginary disparity between them "in point of abilities and character" Horace drafted a long and energetic rejoinder, expostulating against these accusations but prudence—or, perhaps, timidity—prevailed, and, after carefully stowing the draft away,

he wrote a much more brief and temperate reply, informing his "dear brother" that he had used him very ill "without any provocation or any pretence", but that he was still ready to live with him "upon terms of friendship and equality" The passing of years, and the influence of Edward's charming daughters and granddaughters, healed the breach between the irascible elder and the hypersensitive younger brother, but Horace neither destroyed the draft of his rejected letter, nor allowed it passively to perish In the event Rigby sat for Castle Rising only from October 1745 till June 1747, and in 1754 Horace Walpole himself was returned for that borough of contention, which he continued to represent until in 1757 he exchanged it for King's Lynn

In June 1745 Walpole left London for a three weeks' sojourn at Rigby's Essex seat, Mistley Hall, near Manningtree

"I like Mistley prodigiously," he wrote to Hanbury Williams, "if it were not for the house, and the walks, and the avenues, which are all bad and *déplacées*, it would be a delightful place I have built Roman porticos, Gothic spires, and Chinese galleries in plentiful ideas there"

In July the belligerent intentions of France became sufficiently obvious to alarm him extremely He tells Mann that, with all the reasons that he has for not loving "great part of" England, it "is impossible not to feel the shock of living at the period of all its greatness¹ to be one of the *Ultimi Romanorum*"¹ He actually conceived a wild project, which never even approached execution, of betaking himself to The Hague, where he would "at least hear sooner from the army—and know better what is likely to happen"

at home In his rôle of "one of the *Ultimi Romanorum*" it was, perhaps, natural that Walpole should be attracted by Chute's offer to purchase on his behalf the marble eagle "found in the gardens of Boccapadugli, within the precinct of Caracalla's bath" Yet he hesitates

Would it not be folly to be buying curiosities now? how can I tell that I shall have anything in the world to pay for it by the time it is bought? You may present these reasons to Mr Chute, and if he laughs at them, why then he will buy the eagle for me, if he thinks them of weight, not

Apparently Mr Chute laughed, for the purchase was concluded in due course This was the famous eagle destined to share with the busts of Vespasian and Caligula the place of pre-eminence among the treasures of the *museo Walpoliano* at Strawberry Hill An engraving of it may be seen depending from the table upon which Walpole's elbow rests in his portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

The late summer of 1745 was full of rumours and perturbations, and the flicker of distant lightning against a sullen sky Walpole, often quivering with ill-dissembled alarm, comments somewhat peevishly upon the imperturbability of the citizens of London That "the disposition of the drama" should be in the hands of the Duke of Newcastle, "those hands that are always groping and sprawling, and fluttering, and hurrying on the rest of his precipitate person" was hardly reassuring, but what seems to have irked the chronicler even more at this moment was the inveterate English habit "to take dangers for sights, and evils for curiosities". His next letter records the issue of

a proclamation "for apprehending the Pretender's son", who, unknown to those who issued it, had already landed at Eriska, in the Hebrides

On August 8 Walpole left London in company with Rigby, on a jaunt to Portsmouth, Wilton, and Mount Edgecumbe, from which he did not return till the fifth of the month following. Mount Edgecumbe, of course, was the seat of old Lord Edgecumbe, father of the light-hearted Richard Edgecumbe whose portrait, in a "conversation piece", together with George Selwyn and "Gilly" Williams, Sir Joshua was afterwards commissioned to paint for the Refectory at Strawberry Hill.

When he reached town on September 5 Walpole found it ringing with the news from Scotland.

The young Pretender, at the head of three thousand men, has got a march on General Cope, who is not eighteen hundred strong, and when the last accounts came away, was fifty miles nearer Edinburgh than Cope, and by this time is there.

The strange reluctance of the clans to rise in defence of the honest and benign House of Hanover, the ill-success of the Dukes of Atholl and Argyll in their efforts to raise troops to stem the advance of the "rebels", the fact that though they had been "very zealous", Lords Loudon, Fortrose, and Panmure had been able to muster only "some men", all combine to appal Walpole, who ejaculates despairingly, "I look upon Scotland as gone!"

It would be an unprofitable exercise to follow the course of "the '45" in Horace Walpole's letters, though while it was in progress he wrote hardly any uncoloured by news from the North. That news was

always belated, and often inaccurate Hopes and fears alike were liable to be belied by the event before they had been set down in writing One can only watch, as with Walpole's eyes, the Jacobite wave gather and move forward, break, disperse, and recede

His tone in speaking of "the boy," Charles Edward, is rather surprisingly tolerant and good-humoured

"Every now and then," he tells Mann, "a Scotchman comes and pulls the boy by the sleeve, 'Pience, here is another mon taken!' then with all the dignity in the world the boy hopes nobody was killed in the action!"

Indeed, it is clear that the greater part of Walpole's apprehensions are purely selfish Should the honest and benign House of Hanover be cast down, what would happen to him? "A question to be asked!" So he thus unburdens himself to the imperturbable Montagu

The moment I have snugged up a closet or a dressing-room, I have always warning given me that my lease is out Four years ago I was mightily at my ease in Downing Street, and then the good woman, Sandys, took my lodgings over my head, and was in such a hurry to junket her neighbours, that I had scarce time allowed me to wrap up my old china in a little hay Now comes the Pretender's boy, and promises all my comfortable apartments in the Exchequer and Custom House to some forlorn Irish peer, who chooses to remove his pride and poverty out of some large old unfurnished gallery at St Germain's Why really, Mr Montagu, this is not pleasant!

The defeat of Cope at Prestonpans on September 21 rekindled Walpole's liveliest apprehensions, and drew from him the rueful acknowledgment that the Highlanders were "not such raw ragamuffins" as report had called them By October 4, however, his

fears ebb once more, "the good people of England have at last rubbed their eyes and looked about them", Mann is urged to dry his wet-brown-paperiness, and "be in spirits again" A month later "the Rebellion has made no progress, nor produced any incidents worth mentioning" On November 15 even the news that "the rebels are come into England" scarce sends a tremor down the chronicle quill

By their marching westward to avoid Wade it is evident they are not strong enough to fight him They may yet retire back into their mountains, but if once they get to Lancaster their retreat is cut off, for Wade will not stir from Newcastle till he has embarked them deep into England, and then he will be behind them

It was not long before Horace Walpole was sufficiently reassured to conclude the purchase not only of the Boccapadugli eagle, but of a Roman altar as well "I even begin," he adds, hopefully, "to believe that I shall be able to pay for them "

On November 29, only five days before the Highlanders reached Derby, he writes to Mann,

My fears have been very great, for the greatness of our stake, but I now write in the greatest confidence of our getting over this ugly business

Cumberland, the "Nollkejumskoi" of later derision, was marching north, and Conway was on his staff What chance had Charles and his uncouth levies against such a conjunction of valour and virtue? The news of the fall of Derby caused, it is true, a brief panic in London, but on December 9, only three days after the Highland retreat had begun, Walpole declares, "We fear them no longer", and on the 20th he exclaims

exultantly, "We have at last got a Spring tide of good luck" It was true They had The new year, 1746, was ushered in by joy-bells celebrating the surrender of Carlisle to Cumberland, and before it was a fortnight old all projects of invasion on the part of France were seen to have been "laid aside" After that, the fleeting success of the clansmen against Hawley at Falkirk on January 17 might startle but could not astound the mind of Walpole "The very same dragoons ran away at Falkirk that ran away at Preston Pans," he observes with scorn Fears he still harbours, but they are now for Conway, not for England or for himself Less than a month later he can say "pho!" at the very word "Rebellion", and is dedicating as much paper to recording resignations and counter-resignations in the Cabinet as he would shortly before have been filling with the deeds of invading and defending armies

Before the year 1745 closed there occurred an event far more momentous in the life of Horace Walpole than any of the national or political crises which, up to that point, he had traversed This was his reconciliation with Gray

The exact manner of this reconciliation, like the exact matter of the quarrel, remains obscure We have two accounts of the attendant circumstances from Gray's hand, none from Walpole's After Conway's ineffectual *démarche* in 1741, four years passed before another attempt, from another quarter, was crowned with success If—as it would appear—the happy mediatrix was the second Mrs Conyers Middleton, some credit may also be due to that most amiable of iconoclasts, "Fiddling Conyers". After certain pre-

liminary manœuvres, with which Gray kept his "dear, dear Wharton" *au courant*, it was arranged that when crossing London on his way from Cambridge to Stoke Poges in November 1745, the poet should inform Walpole of his presence in town. Divining that Wharton would be "curious to know what had passed", Gray despatched to that sympathetic person a graphic description of the interview.

I wrote a Note the Night I came, & immediately received a very civil Answer. I went the following evening to see *the Party* (as Mrs. Foible says) was something abash'd at his Confidence. he came to meet me, kiss'd me on both Sides with all the Ease of one who receives an Acquaintance just come out of the Country, squatted me into a Fauteuil, begun to talk of the Town & this & that & t'other, & continued with little Interruption for three Hours, when I took my Leave very indifferently pleased, but treated with wondrous Good-breeding. I supped with him next night (as he desired) Ashton was there, whose Formalties tickled me inwardly, for he I found was to be angry about the letter I had wrote him. however in going home together in our Hackney Coach jumbled us into a Sort of Reconciliation. he hammer'd out somewhat like an Excuse, & I received it very readily, because I cared not two pence whither it were true or not. next morning I breakfasted alone with Mr. W. when we had all the *Eclaircissement* I ever expected, & I left him far better satisfied than I had been hitherto. when I return, I shall see him again.

It is safe to hazard a guess that the confidence, the ease, and even the garrulity, which so abashed Gray at the first interview were assumed, not without an effort, by Walpole, in order to mitigate the inevitable thorniness of the occasion. Why the poet should have departed "very indifferently pleased" is not quite clear. Surely he knew his Celadon too well to have expected him to approach draped in metaphorical

sackcloth, and ingeminating *Mea culpa!* After an interval of a year, during which the progressive thawing of the frosty atmosphere in Gray's letters to Walpole bears witness to the tact and patience of the younger man, Gray cannot find it in him to act a generous part. In a letter to John Chute, dated October 12, 1746, he assumes a coy, cautious, and slightly cynical pose.

I find Mr Walpole then made some mention of me to you—yes, we are together again. It is about a year, I believe, since he wrote to me to offer it, and there has been (particularly of late) in appearance, the same kindness and confidence almost as of old. What were his motives I cannot yet guess. What were mine you will imagine, and perhaps blame me. However as yet I neither repent, nor rejoice over-much, but I am pleased.

Can Gray really have been in any uncertainty as to Walpole's motives in seeking a reconciliation? Could they conceivably have been other than a sincere desire to make his peace with an old friend, coupled with an inextinguishable sense that in the beginning he—Walpole—had been in the wrong?

Towards the end of March Walpole was half-apologising to Mann for the lack of matter in his epistles. he had no new triumphs of the Duke to chronicle, Pope and Poetry were dead, the Ladies Orford and Townshend had “exhausted scandal both in their persons and conversation.” This dearth, however, was not of long duration. By the middle of April his quill had once more *quelque chose à mettre sous la dent*; and on the twenty-fifth he sends to Florence the joyful news of Cumberland's “total victory over the rebels” at Culloden.

During the spring and summer of the year 1746 that indefatigable quill found some lighter employments than the chronicling of an abortive "rebellion" and the fate of certain of the "rebels" In March the energetic and resourceful Robert Dodsley launched the first number of a small fortnightly periodical, *The Museum*, which, though it survived only till the September of the year following, was the begetter of the more robust *World*, and the ancestor of the still existing *Annual Register* In the second issue, that of April 12, appeared an article which, as a footnote informs us, was "designed to have been inserted in the First Number, but came too late" It is entitled *A Scheme for raising a large Sum of Money for the Use of the Government by laying a Tax on Message Cards and Notes*, and is signed "Descartes" The issue of May 24 contained a further contribution from the same hand, "An Advertisement of a pretended new book", *The History of Good Breeding*, and the hand was Horace Walpole's Writing to Wharton on August 13 Gray says,

you remember a paper in the *Museum* on Message Cards, wch he [i.e. Walpole] told me was Fielding's, & asked my Opinion about it was his own, and so was the Advertisement on Good Breeding that made us laugh so

From this it is clear that if Walpole's statement in the *Short Notes*, to the effect that the latter paper was "written in Florence in 1741", be accurate, he must have refrained from either showing or mentioning the whimsical fragment to his travelling-companion at that time

It is from Addison rather than from Fielding that the form and colour of the *Scheme* are derived, and

there is in it much more of "Mr Spectator" than of "Scriblerus Secundus" Even the lightest of Fielding's *Miscellanies* has not the same airy urbanity The writer, after defining a museum as "an Hospital for everything that is singular", claims a place there for his *Scheme*, first because it had never been "thought of by any other Person, and secondly as it will give Posterity some light into the Customs of the Present Age" Of these "one of the latest and most accepted" was "the sending of Cards and Notes" Descartes is pleased to observe that

"ladies, by giving themselves the Trouble to transmit their Commands to Cards and Paper" are "at once improving themselves in Spelling and adjusting the whole ceremonial of Engagements without the Possibility of Errors, not to mention the great Encouragement given to the Stationery Trade by the large Demands for Crowquills, Paper, Wafers, etc, Commodities that are all the natural Produce of our Country"

Such messages were at first sent upon the backs of playing-cards, but the extravagance and fastidiousness of womankind had led to the introduction of "Cards without Pips" Descartes makes a grave calculation to demonstrate that in the course of one month each lady of fashion would require at least 1240 of such cards He has much to say on the difference between cards and notes,

the latter of which are only a more voluminous Kind of Cards, and more sacred, because a Footman is allowed to read the former, but is depended upon for never opening the latter Indeed, if the Party-colour'd Gentry's Honour were not to be trusted, what fatal Accidents might arise to Families! for there is not a young Lady in London under Five and twenty who does not transact all her most important Concerns in this Way She does not fall in

Love, she does not change her Lover or her Fan, her Party or her Staymaker, but she notifies it to twenty particular Friends by a Note

He is of opinion that of the total number—800,000 at lowest—of inhabitants of London,

not above twenty thousand are obliged to *send Cards*, because I really have not yet heard that this Fashion has spread much among the Lower Sort of People, at least I know that my own Fishmonger's Wife was extremely surprized last week at receiving an Invitation to an Assembly at Billingsgate, wrote on a very dirty Queen of Clubs

Here is a touch that might have led some of the readers of *The Museum* to conclude that Fielding, then busy with his own journalistic venture, the *True Patriot*, had strayed for a moment into "Doddy's" domain. The ingenious Descartes thus proceeds to the development of his idea. Supposing the duty to amount to 1d per card, the annual gain to the Treasury would be £1,343,333, 6s 8d, "for the Cities of London and Westminster only." Evidently he intends that the cards thus taxed should be transmissible through the post, for he inserts a proviso that "Members of either House" shall not be suffered to frank their wives' cards. It will be time enough, he thinks, to consider notes, as distinct from cards, "when the Bill is brought in." In the course of his intensive studies at the British Museum it is improbable that Dickens ever turned up the bound volumes of Dodsley's *Museum*. The resemblance between Walpole's lacqueys and the friends of Mr John Smawker therefore leads to the conclusion that in its essentials English lacquedom had altered little—if at all—in nine decades. Descartes writes

I have a secret Satisfaction in thinking how Popular I shall be with the Gentlemen of the Upper Gallery, who, by this Establishment of Posts for Cards and Notes, will get all their mornings to themselves, and have Time to dress themselves for the Play, or even to read the Play on which they are to pass their Judgment in the Evening

He ends on a topical note, with a bouquet flung sideways at the victorious Cumberland After consenting to the possible exemption of the *corps diplomatique* from the proposed tax, he concludes thus

But I am entirely against any other Exceptions, unless of some fair and noble Ladies who I hear intend giving balls on the approaching Birthday of the Royal Youth who has so gloriously deliver'd his country and beauteous Countrywomen from their Apprehensions of a Race of barbarous Mountaineers, and who is now extirpating Rebellion in the very Heart of those Inhospitable Mountains

The "Advertisement on Good Breeding" that made Gray and Wharton "laugh so" is a slight enough thing in itself, but has more than one satiric touch which inspires a certain regret that none of the chapters whose headings are set forth was ever written in full The materials for these ten imaginary folio-volumes have been, the grandiose title-page informs us, "Collected from the Best Authors, as Baker's Chronicle, the Compleat Dancing Master, the Law of Nations, the Margrave's Monitor, the Constable's Guide, Picart's Religious Ceremonies, etc", yet the whole is "adapted to the meanest Capacities, whether Peeresses, Lord Chamberlains, Embassadors, Bishops, Justices of the Peace, Gentlemen-Ushers, Barbers or Chambermaids" The publisher of the work is "Clement Quoteherald, at the sign of Champion Dimmock in Ave Mary Lane" Several of the chapter-headings

are exceedingly "Horatian" Such are Book I Chapter IV *of Brutality, Why sometimes taken for Wit, Some Endeavours to prove that Bluntness and Beastliness are no Marks of Courage* Chapter IX. *Enquiry whether Adam called Eve Madam or My Dear before Company, the latter Opinion condemned by the Council of Nice* The irony grows more bitter in the Second Book, of which the seventh chapter deals with *the Folly of Being well-bred to Persons in Want or Affliction*, while the ninth chapter of the Third touches, amongst other matters, upon *Widows, Hoops, Fans, Wigs, Snuff-boxes, Entertainments, etc*, *As Also Directions for forgetting one's Friends, etc etc* Walpole was no fierce denunciator of the foibles of mankind His good breeding and his hatred of excess taught him a philosophy of life more comfortable, if less profound, than that evolved by the Dean of St Patrick's Yet the *saeva indignatio* of Swift seems to leap up here and there in these ironical phrases, and to touch them with a faint and brief reflection of its own livid flame

CHAPTER V

“THE BEAUFHES”—THE JACOBITE LORDS—THE EPILOGUE
TO “TAMERLANE”—STRAWBERRY HILL

“AFTER all your goodness to me”, Walpole writes to Montagu, on his return from a visit to his old school-fellow at Windsor in May 1746, “don’t be angry that I am glad I am got into brave old London again”. He adds that he is deep in the newly-published *Sidney Papers*, and that “a little pamphlet of Sir Philip’s in defence of his Uncle Leicester” has given him “a much better opinion of his parts than his dolorous *Arcadia*”.

At this time the friendship between Montagu and himself was of the warmest, but when “dear George” commends “dear Horry’s” letters, his praises are hastily shrugged aside.

“Don’t commend me,” urges Walpole, “you don’t know what harm it will do me—you will make me a pains-taking man, and I had rather be dull without any trouble. From partiality to me you will not allow my letters to be letters. Jesus! it sounds as if I wrote them to be fine, and to have them printed, which might be very well for Mr. Pope——”

but not for Mr. Walpole, who, of course, never at any time jotted down a preliminary draft, or retrieved his letters from his correspondents in order to

annotate and amend them! He is probably less disingenuous when, writing to the same friend, he professes comparative ignorance of current politics, and vows that his books, his *virtù*, and his "other follies and amusements" take up too much of his time to leave him leisure to attend to the affairs of the public. Among these "other follies" he would probably have counted—and a severe critic might still count—his poem *The Beauties, an Epistle addressed to Mr Eckhardt the Painter*, concerning which he remarked to Mann, "I never wrote anything that I esteemed less." Eckhardt, a German by birth, then enjoyed something of a vogue in London, and painted, among other well-known people, Conyers Middleton, Gray, Lady Mary Churchill, and Walpole himself. Towards the end of June 1746 Walpole was evidently "roughing out" this work, for he then wrote to Montagu that he wished he could "meet with any man that could copy the Beauties in the Castle." Three weeks later he was with Rigby at Mistley, whence—at the instigation of his host—he sent a draft of the poetical epistle to Henry Fox, whose sister-in-law figured among the ladies whom Eckhardt was urged to paint. Fox was at that time in high favour. It was only two years since he had intervened on Sir Robert's side in the debate on Pulteney's Secret Committee motion, and the day was still distant when his treatment of Conway should estrange him from Conway's loyal cousin. Yet even in the height of their friendship one notices in his letters to Walpole a touch of that mingled *méfiance* and assurance which upstarts not infrequently betray in their dealings with people of established rank and station. The manuscript, however, he received with

enthusiasm "As many thanks as I have to give you," he writes, "I think more are due to Rigby, for I have long known that it is much easier for you to write good verses than to show them when you have done." And he exclaims, with rising fervour, "Upon my word, I never read anything more poetical and pretty than many parts of this, especially that on Fanny." This particular Beauty, Fanny Greville, *née* Maccartney, was the godmother of another Fanny far better known to fame—to wit, Fanny Burney.

The lines "on Fanny" singled out by Fox may be quoted as a fair example of the tints and texture of the whole composition

How pretty Flora, wanton maid,
By Zephyr woo'd in noon-tide shade,
With rosy hand coquely throwing
Pansies beneath her sweet touch blowing,
How blithe she look'd, let Fanny tell,
Let Zephyr own if halt so well

Fox was no bad critic. These six lines—despite the iambic quantity given to "pansies" in the fourth—remain among the most pleasing of all the couplets addressed to "Friend Eckhardt", and the image of Fanny remains among the most attractive of the subjects there proffered to his brush. The painter is first urged to disregard the goddesses of antiquity, the writings of Pliny, and the opinions of MM. "Félibien and Fresnoy"—i.e. André Félibien, sometimes called the "French Vasari", and that Dufresnoy whose *De Arte Graphica* was translated into English by Dryden. Then he is thus exhorted

In Britain's isle observe the fair,
And curious chuse your models there,

for, if he follows this advice

On your each canvas we'll admire
The charms of the whole heav'nly choir

Soon the poet imagines himself in a more harrowing predicament than that of Paris

Ten Queens of Beauty sure I see!

The resemblance between these voluptuous and yet monotonous figures and those painted by Lely and Kneller was perfectly obvious to Walpole, who, indeed, drew much of his inspiration from those languishing and smirking dames, and observes that

George's age beholds restor'd
What William boasted, Charles ador'd

To two, at least, of the earlier Beauties he alludes by name—Lely's Duchess of Cleveland and Kneller's Duchess of Grafton

He is frightened out of his wits by Fox's encomiums on his verses "But, seriously, my dear Sir," he writes in reply, "you alarm me, with talking of making those I sent you public" And, after a few more protestations, he proceeds to analyse his sentiments in some detail

You think me modest, but all my modesty is pride, while I am unknown, I am as great as my own imagination pleases to make me the instant I get into that dreadful Court of Requests you talk of, I am as silly a fellow as Thomson or Glover—you even reduce me to plead that foolish excuse against being published, which authors make to excuse themselves when they have published—that their compositions were made in a hurry, or extempore Rigby will assure you that what I sent you was literally wrote in less than three hours, and, my dear Harry, I am not vain enough to think that I can write in three hours what would deserve to live three days.

The inclusion of the *Beauties* both in Dodsley's *Collection* of 1748, and Walpole's own *Fugitive Pieces* of 1758 is an amusing commentary upon that last assertion. But then, as the *Short Notes* inform us, the poem had already been "handed about till it got into print, very incorrectly"

On August 1, 1746, Walpole sent to Mann one of the most frequently-quoted and the most deservedly-admired letters of their whole correspondence—the description of the trial of the Jacobite lords in Westminster Hall. There is little need for the chronicler to tell us that the sight at once "feasted one's eyes and engaged all one's passions". From the opening passages, when the stage is set in the scarlet-hung hall and the *dramatis personae* are introduced, Kilmainock, "tall and slender, with an extreme fine person", Cromartie, dejected and sullen, Balmerino, "the most natural brave old fellow I ever saw", it is evident that here Walpole's eyes were fed, and his imagination kindled, as never in his life before. The account of the trial is admirably planned. Action, dialogue, and narrative are balanced and alternated with judgment and skill, and the comic element, so necessary in order to give full weight to the tragic, emerges at exactly the right moments, and in exactly the right way. The painful tension is relieved with an almost Shakespearean drop into farce when "old Noisa, . . . an old Jew that kept a tavern", hearing Walpole remark, "I really feel for the prisoners", exclaims in a burst of righteous indignation, "Feel for them! pray, if they had succeeded, what would have become of *all us*?" That Walpole, despite his Whiggish and anti-Popish upbringing, his admiration for Cumberland, and his

zeal for the House of Hanover, *did* feel for the prisoners, and with ever-increasing warmth, cannot be doubted for one moment. Oddly enough, it is not on behalf of the elegant Kilmarnock, with his drooping shoulders and his "too exactly dressed hair" that his sympathies are most generously engaged, but on behalf of the uncouth, dauntless and jocular Balmerino. He writes on the same theme, though more briefly, to George Montagu on August 2, and is charmed that on the way from Westminster to the Tower "poor brave old Balmerino" should have "stopped the coach at Charing Cross to buy honey-blobs, as the Scotch call gooseberries." Three days later he is still harping on "old Balmerino." He is growing weary of a London thick with dust, encumbered with sightseers, heavy with the imagined reek of rebel blood. "If", he writes to Montagu, "you can find me out any clean, little house in Windsor, ready furnished, that is not absolutely in the middle of the town, but near you, I shall be glad to take it for three or four months."

To such good purpose did Montagu bestir himself, the clean little house was promptly found, "within the precincts of the Castle at Windsor", and as promptly rented from the owner, Mr Jordan, at forty guineas a year.

Walpole remained in London till the day following the execution of the Jacobite lords, but the very full and vivid description of the scene which he wrote to Mann was derived from "two persons who were at the house next the scaffold", and a third "who was upon it." He himself prudently abstained from "assisting" at a ceremony so trying to sensitive nerves, had he not fainted three times at the sight of a flagellant's bleeding

shoulders in Rome? To the last, all his enthusiasm is for Balmerino, who gave the signal to the executioner "by tossing up his arm as if he were giving the signal for battle"

In September Walpole's tranquillity was shattered by the arrival in London of a certain Marquis Rinuncini whom, at Mann's request, he took under his wing, and to whom he did the honours of "the palaces, and Richmond Gardens and Park, and Chenevix's shop" Rinuncini did not prove grateful either to his sponsor in Florence or his cicerone in England, but the letter recording his visit is memorable as containing one of Walpole's earliest allusions to Mrs Chenevix, "the noted toy-woman", from whom he was destined to buy one of the most famous playthings of the century, to wit, Strawberry Hill. It was probably a consolation for all the arduous and endurances of the Rinuncini *corvée* when, less than a month later, two very different travellers arrived from the same pleasant strand—"the dear Chutes", and nothing less

"I strolled to town one day last week", writes Walpole to Mann, "and there I found them! Poor creatures! there they were! wondering at everything they saw, but with the difference from Englishmen that go abroad of keeping their amazement to themselves"

Before the year waned, Gray had completed the group thus happily reunited, and was "flaunting about at Publick Places of all kinds" with his—and Walpole's—"two Italianised friends"

1746 had been a rather good vintage year for Gray, who did not fail to keep Walpole advised of the renewed activities of his Muse. Both the Eton Ode and the Ode on Spring found their way from Cam-

bridge to Arlington Street, or to the "little tub" on Windsor Hill, and both were received with enthusiasm. Writing to Conway on October 3, Walpole encloses a copy of the former poem, which he desires him "to like excessively", and of which he modestly hastens to disclaim the authorship.

You will immediately conclude, out of good breeding, that it is mine, and that it is charming. I shall be much obliged to you for the first thought, but desire you will retain only the second, for it is Mr. Gray's, and not your humble servant's.

In every recurring month of November between 1702 and 1815, the anniversary of the birth of William III and of his disembarkation at Torbay was celebrated by a pompful performance of Rowe's *Tamerlane*. This celebration was awaited with more than usual interest in 1746, for it was felt that the recent drastic suppression of the last flicker of Jacobite activity gave an additional point and force to the play, and a topical epilogue was confidently anticipated. Nor were these loyal anticipations left unsatisfied. On November 3 Walpole is writing to Montagu from Arlington Street:

I shall be with you by the end of the week but just now I am under the maidenhead-palpitation of an author. My epilogue will, I believe, be spoken to-morrow night and I flatter myself I shall have no faults to answer for but what are in it, for I have kept secret whose it is.

This epilogue was spoken by Mrs. Pritchard in the character of the Comic Muse, but of its reception all that Walpole says, in sending the manuscript to Mann, is, "it succeeded to flatter me." Surely the laughing lips of the Comic Muse were never compelled to frame

more ponderously solemn couplets than these! True, she begins by reminding her audience that

once more in annual joy we meet
This genial night in freedom's fav'rite seat,
And o'er the two great empires still I reign
Of Covent Garden and of Drury Lane,

but she proceeds to remind them also that recently
clouds o'er all our realm impended!

instead of the pleasing prospect of "annual joy",

Chains, real chains, our heroes had in view,
And scenes of mimic dungeons chang'd to true
An equal fate the stage and Britain dreaded
Had Rome's young missionary spark succeeded
But laws and liberties are trifling treasures,
He threaten'd that grave property, your pleasures!

The first, and almost the only, touch of comedy is provided by a vision of the Tragic Muse, who had shared the general perturbation

'Tis eyes well tutor'd in the trade of grief
She rais'd a smil and well-lac'd handkerchief,

before informing her "buskin'd progeny" of the imminent arrival of "a bloody chief"

Big with the work of slav'ry and of Rome

His coming, she declared, must infallibly prove

Fatal alike to audience and to play'rs

Why either the Comic or the Tragic Muse should have feared eclipse under the sway of a scion of the House of Stuart it is not very easy to understand, but the epilogue makes it clear that both Muses were greatly alarmed, and that their relief was proportionately great when the peril was averted. The sound

of the name "William" inspires the author to a glowing passage of rhetorical interrogation

What golden vision's this I see arise?
 What youth is he with comeliest conquest crown'd,
 His warlike brow with full-blown laurels bound?
 What wreaths are these that Vict'ry dares to join
 And blend with trophies of my fav'rite Boyne?

This particular year ended cheerfully enough for Horace Walpole. "The Chutes and I deal extremely together," he writes to Mann in December, "but they abuse me, and tell me I am grown so *English*! lack-a-day, so I am." Despite this not undeserved reproach, the society of the uncle and nephew must have been very agreeable to him at this time. Gray, too, had thrown off the last traces of his reserve, and was writing to him quite in the old vein. From the following letter, sent in the last days of the year, it is plain that Walpole had already begun to plan, if not to write, his *Memoirs*, though in the *Short Notes* he himself gives the date of their commencement as 1751.

This comes *du fond de ma cellule* to salute Mr H W not so much him that visits and votes, and goes to White's and to Court, as the H W in his rural capacity, snug in his tub on Windsor Hill, and brooding over folios of his own creation. Among the little folks, my godsons and daughters, I cannot choose but enquire more particularly after the health of one, I mean, without a figure, the *Memoirs*. Do they grow?

Walpole's answer to this letter does not appear to have been preserved, but we know from the *Short Notes* that "about the same time" he paraphrased some lines from the first book of Lucan. His enthusiasm for this poet did not diminish as years passed, and

was augmented by the decision of the Jesuit fathers in 1758 that the works of the "brave and honest" Roman should not be included in the curriculum of the Dauphin

During the month of February 1747 members of the House of Commons had what Horace Walpole described to Mann as "a warm day on a motion for inquiring into useless places and quarterings", and Mr Pitt, erewhile Sir Robert's "terrible cornet of horse" but now Paymaster-General under an ascendant star, speaking of the Secret Committee—of which he had been one—was "so well advised" as to acquit Sir Robert "pretty amply" Horace Walpole was pleased, but he did not see "the so vast merit" in Pitt's owning now "for his interest what for his honour he should have owned five years ago", and he thought that Uncle Horace and brother Ned demonstrated *their* pleasure with rather too much *empressement* Lovat's last buffooneries, and the not altogether ignoble closing scenes of his career, provided the material for two further letters that must have been read and retailed with great interest at the Casa Manetti, but the early spring of 1747 is memorable for students of Walpole's life chiefly on account of the watery demise of the pensive Selima, and its sequel The election of Selima's master to a Fellowship of the Royal Society, which occurred about the same time, seems by contrast an event of small moment When the *Ode on the death of a favourite Cat* was written, Celadon and Orozmades must surely have felt that the fast phantom of their quarrel had been drowned with her in that famous "tub of gold fishes".

May was, on the whole, a month of pleasing news.

Sir William Yonge's "good-natured bill" to allow prisoners charged with treason to have the assistance of counsel engaged Walpole's humanitarian sympathies at once; for, *pace* Macaulay, those sympathies were not of that capricious kind always either absent entirely or present in excess. Mr Fox's great ball at Holland House and Admiral Anson's neat little victory over the French off Cape Finisterre were also agreeable items for a Florentine gazette, though the gazetteer seems conscious of a certain dearth of solid material. The next letter, though he apologises for its extreme brevity, is actually of extreme interest, for it contains the first mention of the "little new farm" which he had "just taken out at Twickenham." There he was glad to seek refuge from the pother of the impending elections. He had declined to stand for King's Lynn, preferring his safe Cornish seat, and leaving the field in Norfolk free for "Prince Pig-wiggin", Uncle Horace's unimpressive eldest son. "He is to be chosen for Lynn," writes Walpole, "because I must have gone, I go to Callington again, whither I don't go." Of the "little new farm" he tells Mann "the house is so small that I can send it you in a letter to look at"—a pleasantry to be revived more than once, after the house had doubled and trebled its original dimensions—and he is sure that, with his two or three little meadows, and his "Turkish sheep and two cows, all studied in their colours for becoming the view", he will "grow as much a shepherd as any swain in the *Astræa*." It was to Conway, however, that he wrote the most characteristic and, perhaps, the best known, of all the many letters which that "little plaything-house" inspired.

TWICKENHAM, June 8, 1747

You perceive by my date that I am got into a new camp, and have left my tub at Windsor. It is a little plaything-house that I got out of Mrs Chenevix's shop, and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw. It is set in enamelled meadows, with filigree hedges.

A small Euphrates through the piece is roll'd,
And little finches wave their wings in gold

Two delightful roads, that you would call dusty, supply me continually with coaches and chaises, barges as solemn as Barons of the Exchequer move under my window. Richmond Hill and Ham Walks bound my prospect, but thank God! the Thames is between me and the Duchess of Queensberry. Dowagers as plenty as flounders inhabit all around, and Pope's ghost is just now skimming under my window by a most poetical moonlight. I have about land enough to keep such a farm as Noah's, when he set up in the ark with a pair of each kind, but my cottage is rather cleaner than I believe his was after they had been cooped up together forty days. The Chenevixes had tricked it out for themselves: up two pair of stairs is what they call Mr Chenevix's library, furnished with three maps, one shelf, a bust of Sir Isaac Newton, and a lame telescope without any glasses. Lord John Sackville *predeceased* me here, and instituted certain games called *cricketalia*, which have been celebrated this very evening in honour of him in a neighbouring meadow.

On June 26 Walpole reports the safe arrival of the Boccapadugli eagle, destined to be one of the chief glories of the plaything-house. Despite the fact that its beak was damaged in transit, its joyful owner describes it as "a glorious fowl", and declares, when he has placed it opposite the Vespasian, "there are no two such morsels in England!"

During the greater part of July and August Walpole remained in London, where there were "not ten

people" besides the Chuteheds and himself, and whence he sent notes upon the successive stages of the futile war, such as the fall of Bergen-op-Zoom, or the capture of "two-and forty sail of the Domingo fleet" by the English. In September he was back at Twickenham, where Chute and Montagu visited him, and where he began to cultivate the acquaintance of Mann's brother, Galfridus, with results highly advantageous to that amiable army-clothier.

In the *Short Notes* it is recorded that during 1747, 1748, and 1749, Horace Walpole "wrote thirteen numbers of a weekly paper called *Old England or the Broad-bottom Journal*, but being sent to the printer without a name, they were published horribly deformed and spoiled". Believing his father's ancient foe, George Lyttleton, to be the author of the *Letter to the Tories* that caused some stir in 1747, he indited a *Letter to the Whigs*, "a careless performance, and written in five days", which, with two others, was printed in the ensuing Spring. A somewhat imperfect edition of the *Ædes Walpolianæ*, limited to two hundred copies, and intended for distribution among friends, was struck off in 1747, the revised and corrected edition appearing five years later.

From the letters of 1747 it is evident that "the little new farm", though an agreeable retreat, has not yet become an absorbing interest. The property belonged to three minors, and when Mrs. Chenevix's lease expired, and Walpole had determined to acquire the place in perpetuity—that is to say, in 1749¹—it

¹ In *Short Notes* Walpole himself gives the date as 1748, but a letter to Montagu of May 18, 1749, proves that the bill legalising the purchase was not introduced before that month and year. The purchase-money amounted to £776 10s.

had to be bought "by act of Parliament" In the first autumn of his tenancy he was still "casting many a southern look towards Florence", and declaring, "I never was happy but there, have a million of times repented of returning to England, where I never was happy nor expect to be" This Horace had not then realised that *his* Tibur was to be Twickenham

It was inevitable that Walpole should buy a little house somewhere, and make a plaything of it, and cram it with *bric-à-brac*. That he should have conceived the idea of making its roof bristle with many pinnacles and its ceilings unfurl much fan-tracery is, perhaps, no matter for wonder, but it is matter for thankfulness, since this conception of his was destined to exert a singular influence upon the most salutary of all the intellectual movements that marked the second half of his century—the Return to Romance. When, in 1750, Walpole avowed his intention to build "a little Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill", the polite world still regarded the terms Gothic and barbarous as more or less synonymous. Taste—that sort of taste with which heaven was wont to visit wealthy fools—had, it is true, begun to weary of Palladian severity, and stucco "ruins" were arising here and there for the beautification of parks already "embellished" with bridges in the Chinese manner But the proposition that Gothic art could be applied successfully to domestic architecture was one both to startle and to astound As Professor Ker pointed out, the first appeal of the Romantic Revival was architectural rather than literary People tired of parterres and pediments before they tired of the heroic couplet, and landscape gardeners were making trees "hang over

somewhat poetical"—to borrow a phrase from one of them whom both Pope and Walpole patronised—before the colourless and rigid conventions of the Pope-Boileau school in England had been touched by the genius of Gray and by the talent—to call it nothing higher—of Macpherson, Chatterton, and the two Wartons

On the literary and historical side also Walpole was no trail-blazing pioneer, no lonely Baptist ululating in an unexcited wilderness. The romantic spirit was already shining faintly when Addison extolled *Chevy Chase* and Lady Wardlaw indited the mock-archaic ballad of *Hardyknut*. It may, however, be considered a little curious that so potent a spirit should later have moved upon the face of waters so shallow as the whims and fancies of Horace Walpole. He was certainly never an antiquary in the sense that Leland and Camden, Dugdale and Selden, were antiquaries, and his astonishing description of the *Canterbury Tales* as "a lump of mineral from which Dryden has extracted all the gold" goes far to support Professor Saintsbury's view that he had "no real love for mediæval things in general, and no real understanding of Romance in particular", and that "there is hardly a genuine and unguarded expression of taste, throughout his immense body of writing, which is sincerely Romantic when he is not 'speaking in character'—talking 'Strawberry'". The superficial quality of his antiquarianism is demonstrated in his addenda to *Baker's Chronicle*, and in his researches into the career of the many-wintered Countess of Desmond. Of genuine archæologists he was, indeed, a little contemptuous and a little afraid—unless, like Cole and Pinkerton, Lysons and Zouch,

they were willing to revolve as distant satellites within the orbit of Strawberry Hill. Yet Strawberry's creator did much to rend asunder the cold cerecloths that muffled the still breathing, though long sepulchred, form of Romance. His social prestige, his not inconsiderable wealth—think of the contrast between *his* income and poor Shenstone's £300 a year—the curiosity which his fads aroused in circles that might not otherwise have cared two flirts of a fan or two pinches of snuff whether pinnacles were more to be admired than colonnades, or the Black Prince's hauberk than the cuirass of Hannibal, all contributed to fortify and accelerate a movement of which he himself was very far from foreseeing the full results. The spiritual descendants of Walpole are many, and not a few of them reflect credit upon the forebear whom they resemble so little. Setting aside mere imitators, such as Clara Reeve, Mrs Radcliffe, and "Monk" Lewis, and parodists, conscious or unconscious, such as Peacock, Barham, and Miss Austen, there are scaled of the tribe of Horace writers as vivid and as picturesque as Byron and Keats, Buiger and Victor Hugo, Scott, Dumas, and Alfred de Vigny. Their true ancestral halls are in the *Castle of Otranto*. On the other hand, the architectural "children" of Strawberry itself are a rather less impressive family. They include Fonthill, Lee Priory, and Abbotsford, to which were added—after the movement had got its second wind in the first half of the nineteenth century—such erections as St Luke's Church, Chelsea, the Assize Courts at Manchester, and, strangest of all, the rectory where Tennyson was born.

Gray, who reacted quickly to the stimulus of the

Strawberry idea, would fain have seen it carried out with stern consistency, and was inclined to regret that the windows were glazed. He should have known that Walpole loved snugness and neatness almost as dearly as he loved pinnacles. "In truth," confesses the Preface to the final edition of the *Description of the Villa*, "I did not mean to make my house so Gothic as to exclude convenience and modern refinements in luxury" and he was very far from echoing Shenstone's exhortation to the winds to bear him "near some sad ruin's ghastly shade to dwell", in order that he might "fondly eye the rude remains" and "from the mouldering refuse build his cell". Mould would have been exceedingly inimical to the damascened armour, the marble emperors and eagles, the medals, enamels, paintings, and bronzes which formed the *museo Walpoliano*. Many years later Selwyn, very ill-naturedly, wrote of Strawberry as "a catacomb, or, at best, a museum, rather than a habitation", and of its owner as "one of the most carefully finished miniatures and best-preserved mummies in the whole collection".

The site of this fantastic, incongruous, and yet oddly engaging toy-castle was occupied in 1747 by a modest house built fifty years earlier by Lord Bradford's coachman, and "called by the common people *Chopped-straw-hall*, they supposing that by feeding his lordship's horses with chopped straw he had saved enough money to build the house". The name Strawberry Hill, however, appeared in the old leases, and by that pleasing name Walpole soon christened his diminutive estate. The original building—never demolished, but gradually incorporated in the "Gothic castle"—had been "let as a lodging house" to a

succession of not undistinguished tenants, including Colley Cibber, who wrote *The Refusal or the Lady's Philosophy* under its modest roof Walpole, as has been recorded, took over the remainder of a lease from the persuasive and rapacious Mrs Chenevix, in whose famous toy-shop bergamot tooth-pick-cases and *papier-mâché* snuff-boxes, and other pretty baubles, as well as children's playthings, could be bought for many times their fair price

Though the resolution to Gothicise the little house must have been taken as early as September 1749, when he wrote to Montagu that he had found a text in Deuteronomy to authorise his "future battlements", it was not until 1753 that Walpole began to build the Refectory or Great Parlour, with its truly terrible chimney-piece designed by the younger Bentley, and the library, where the books were ultimately ranged within Gothic arches and pierced work 1760-63¹ saw the addition of the picture gallery, with a ceiling copied from that of Henry VII's chapel, the round tower, the great cloister and the tribune In 1770 the great north bedchamber was built, followed in 1776 by the Flemish tower, the Beauclerk tower (built to contain Lady D^y Beauclerk's soot-water illustrations to *The Mysterious Mother*), and the hexagon closet After that, few additions, or none, were made to the fabric until, in 1842, Frances, Lady Waldegrave, inherited the empty shell of the "castle" from her husband, the seventh Earl, and set to work, with better intentions than results, to enlarge and improve it

¹ Walpole gives the dates 1760-61 for the earlier stages of the construction, but M Paul Yvon (in *La Vie d'un Dilettante*) following Austin Dobson, considers this an understatement and that the dates given above are correct

In quest of designs Walpole not only ransacked Dugdale and Hollar, and enlisted the aid of Chute and Bentley, but went upon a sequence of antiquarian tours through various parts of rural England. In the little plantation, called, by courtesy, "the wood", was built a little edifice called, by courtesy, "the chapel", which had a ceiling designed by Chute, an oaken Gothic bench designed by Bentley, and, among other more sumptuous objects associated with "superstition's papal gloom", an earthenware holy water stoup presented by Selwyn. On the "castle" itself stucco pinnacles sprang up like fast-growing plants and lath-and-plaster parapets rose—though to no very great height—against the horizon. Small wonder that a disconcerted Frenchwoman should describe the effect as *pas digne de la solidité anglaise*!

It is very easy to smile compassionately at these follies, and at the suggestion that Aymer de Valence, threatened with ejection from the Abbey, should find a resting-place in the grounds of Strawberry Hill. Before our compassionate smile changes to one of disdain, it might be well for us to recall that only thirty-two years before the Refectory was begun, Strype, himself an antiquary, as the term was then understood, wrote of a "number of rude Gothic monuments" in the Abbey, "which instead of adorning really encumber the church", and remarked scornfully that the effigy on the Vere monument "is in the old Gothic taste, flat on his Back and therefore not to be Relished". To Horace Walpole, more than to any other single Englishman, belongs the credit for having, before the half-spent century closed, reversed the conception popularly attached to the word "Gothic", and changed

it from an adjective of opprobrium into an epithet of praise

On his side, the Lord of Strawberry Hill smiled compassionately at the Squire of The Leasowes "Poor man!" he wanted to have all the world talk of him for the pretty place he had made, and which he seems to have made only that it might be talked of" Yet when the public insisted on making a show of his house, he was flattered as well as harassed by their importunity, nor can it be doubted that he got a good deal of amusement out of his *rôle* of showman, played from behind the scenes, while Margaret, his house-keeper-curatrix, or one of her successors, sustained the principal speaking-part in the centre of the stage

The year 1748 witnessed the expansion of the Strawberry estate from five acres to fourteen, and much planting of trees—though none, as yet, of pinnacles—thereon. In January the publication of Admiral Vernon's papers gave Walpole a sense of impish triumph, as they included documents highly damaging to the reputation of Lord Bath. A month later occurred the peculiar "breeze" between himself and Mr Speaker Onslow. A proposal by the Grenvilles to shift the Assizes from Aylesbury to Buckingham displeased Walpole, as the interests of the Chief Justice, Willes, an old partisan of Sir Robert's, were, or seemed to be, involved. His anxiety to "second Mr Potter" in a debate upon the question was frustrated by Onslow, who also cut short a half-spoken anti-Grenvillite oration by Sir William Stanhope. Walpole promptly published his own abortive speech in Sir William's name. An obvious "blind" as to the identity of the speaker is the remark that Bucking-

ham being a county town for the last forty years was a "reason fit only to capture the imagination of an antiquarian" Grenvillites rushed into print, and Walpole answered them in *The Speech of Richard Whiteliver spoken to the most August Mob in Rag Fair* "All these things", he admits, in the *Short Notes*, "were only excusable by the lengths to which party feeling had been carried against my father, or rather were not excusable even then" Richard Whiteliver is certainly an energetic orator "Wou'd you know", he asked the most August Mob, "for what all men esteem us? Why, for the whole tenour of our conduct For our virulence in opposition and our insolence in power, and for our steadiness of character in being the same noisy, intriguing, buzzing, senseless demagogues in a court party that we were in a faction" The Grenvilles and their friends were not pleased

CHAPTER VI

“DELEND A EST OXONIA” — THE “MEMOIRS” — “THE
FUNERAL OF THE LIONESS” — THE “MEMOIRS”
RESUMED — PAPERS IN THE “WORLD” — “THE
ENTAIL”

TOWARDS the middle of the year 1748 Walpole's enthusiasm for “brave old London” waned apace, and he was off in Essex again, staying with Rigby, whose society would appear to have been as inspiring as his political morality—or lack of it—was deplorable. Thence he betook himself to the house of that odd creature Robert Nugent, poetaster, adventurer, happy wooer of wealthy widows, at Gosfield, and thence was “carried to see the last remains of the glory of the old Aubrey de Veres, Earls of Oxford” It was on his return to Strawberry Hill in the August of this year that the vast and rubicund countenance of Kitty Clive dawned upon those pleasant scenes which it was afterwards to illuminate so often and so long. Together with Mrs Pritchard, Pritchard *filz*, and Mrs Methcglan, she dined at the still unbattlemented villa, and was, her *anti*st records, “very good company” From this dinner Walpole may date the beginning of her friendship with Sir John, who, in 1755, assigned to her the pretty little Strawberry Hill, where she lived as his

guest and neighbour till her death thirty years later
A very different August visitor of 1748 was Gray

"He is", wrote Walpole to Montagu, "the worst company in the world—from a melancholy turn, from living reclusely, and from a little too much dignity, he never converses easily"

To Conway he confessed about this time

My present and sole occupation is planting, in which I have made great progress, and talk very learnedly with the nurserymen, except that now and then a lettuce run to seed overturns all my botany, for I have more than once taken it for a curious West Indian flowering shrub

The character-sketch of Henry Fox which was printed as an extraordinary number of the *World* in 1756 was actually written, in the form of a letter to Lady Caroline, during the second year of Walpole's tenancy of Strawberry Hill. Here the wit of the writer is manifestly shackled by the fact that he is attempting a portrait of an individual, not the delineation of a type, his desire to please automatically excludes that touch of malice without which a composition of this kind is apt to be somewhat flat and tame. In the allusions to Fox's gift of "being more agreeably good-natured, and idle with more ease than other people" the curious may discern a hint of certain social qualities—and defects—inherited by the more famous Charles James

It is perhaps a little strange that Walpole's published correspondence for the year 1748 should contain no allusion to Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Various Hands*, that very interesting though disconcertingly unequal miscellany, the nearest approach ever made by the Augustan age to *England's Helicon* and the other great Elizabethan anthologies. Three of ' own com-

positions—the *Epistle to Ashton*, *The Beauties*, and the *Epilogue to Tamerlane*—were included, and three of Gray's. The tactful anthologist must have sought, or affected to seek, Walpole's assistance in the selection of certain of these "pieces", for Gray remarks in a letter to Wharton, "Dodsley is publishing three Miscellaneous Volumes some new, many that have been printed. Mr W. has given him three Odes of mine", the three being the Eton Ode, the Ode to Spring, and Selima.

As the year waned, his plantations absorbed Walpole's attention almost to the exclusion of literature and politics. The signing of peace between England, Holland, France and Spain, hardly makes a ripple upon the surface of his correspondence. "Lord Leicester told me the other day", he wrote to Mann not long afterwards, "that he heard I would not buy some old china because I was laying out all my money in trees. 'Yes', said I, 'my Lord, I used to love blue trees, but now I like green ones'." With 1749, however, there comes a revival of his old interest in politics, and early in March he reports that he has been "shut up in the House of Commons for the last fortnight or three weeks." In June Gray was at Stoke, whence he wrote to Walpole, "Having put an end to a thing whose beginning you have seen long ago, I immediately send it to you." The "thing" was the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*.

Despite the strong anti-monarchical bias of the *Epistle to Ashton*, its author could hardly dissemble his pleasure when early in July 1749 Frederick, Prince of Wales, conveyed to him through Sir Luke Schaub his desire to possess a copy of the *Ædes Walpoleanæ*. "I

sent him one bound quite in coronation robes," he tells Montagu, "and went last Sunday to thank him for the honour." He would have Montagu believe that they spoke only of painting and painters, more especially of the Prince's favourite, Andrea del Sarto, and it is possible that they did. Yet it is, to say the least of it, a curious coincidence that in 1748 and in 1749 Walpole should have been one of the anonymous contributors to the *Remembrancer*. This paper, he informed Mann, was "the *Craftsman* of the present age, and generally levelled at the Duke", that is to say, at him of Cumberland. In his own manuscript notes, preserved among the Waldegrave papers at Chewton Priory, he records that it was published "for the Prince's party", and dropped on the Prince's death in 1751. It is certain that Nollkejumskoi's "known brutality" (to borrow a phrase later applied by Walpole to Dr. Johnson) had rendered him highly obnoxious to Walpole just about the time that Prince Titu was plying his music in order to win his allegiance.

In the *Short Notes* Walpole has left it on record that he wrote in 1749 "a copy of verses on the fireworks for the Peace", never printed, also that about the same time he wrote a pamphlet called *Delenda est Oxonia*, which he thought one of his best, and which was seized at the printer's and suppressed. As Dr. Paget Toynbee has discovered an annotated copy of the pamphlet in Walpole's own hand among the Waldegrave papers, and has given it to the world, it is now possible to measure the pamphleteer's own opinion against "the thing itself." Certain Jacobite demonstrations on the part of a handful of Oxford undergraduates in 1749 had intensified Hanoverian distrust of the older University,

and the Government resolved that the nomination to the Chancellorship should henceforth be vested in the Crown. The immediate result of this proceeding would have been the election of Nollkejumskoï, but the proposition aroused such a storm in the anti-Cumberland camp that it had to be abandoned. Walpole's pamphlet was, he explains, "designedly colour'd very strongly in order to pass the better for an Oxford performance", and he introduces a bold splash of Oxford colour in the opening paragraph, where James II, whom we saw in the *Epistle to Ashton* "meditating to subvert the laws", is credited with "many great and noble Qualities."

As the pamphleteer warms to his work, one pauses to wonder what can have been the underlying motive which lent so mordant an edge to his ironic weapon. Recollections of Prince Titus's urbanity and of Cumberland's bloodthirstiness probably enhanced a quite sincere prejudice against the violation of ancient rights and privileges, and then Walpole always loved an ambush, or, as Macaulay puts it, "he loved mischief, but he loved quiet, and he was constantly on the watch for opportunities of gratifying both his tastes at once." The allusion is, of course, to the finicking political intrigues of Walpole's middle age, but it is relevant here, for the affair of the Oxford Chancellorship gave him just such an opportunity, and he seized it with alacrity. After a sly hit at "the late Patriots", he aims one at the Grenvilles, and another at the Pelhams. Then precedents are invoked—Henry IV's Lack-Learning Parliament, Bishop Gardiner's obstruction of Sir John Cheke. One hears Whig laughter behind the Tory mask when the author declares that (Robert)

"Walpole himself, whose head was always full of plots and visions of the Pretender . and who was by no means remarkable for his patronage of Learning, never attempted anything like this for the security of his Masters". Near the close a more cogent argument emerges "Other countries, who look on Oxford as the Athens of the modern world", when they see her chastised for disaffection, "will examine what errors in our Government have made so learned a body cast off all respect for their Governors "

On his way back from Mistley to Strawberry Hill in the summer of this year Walpole had been "extremely entertained with some excursions made out of the road in search of antiquities", and before his young trees began to turn yellow he went on a pilgrimage to Sussex, pursuing the same quest This time he had Chute as a fellow-pilgrim "We thought ourselves in the northeast part of England", he writes to Montagu, "the whole country has a Saxon air, and the inhabitants are as savage as if King George the Second was first monarch of the East Angles "

This year, which saw the *Elegy* completed, saw also a steady increase of cordiality in the tone of Gray's letters to Walpole His concern is transparently genuine when he hears in November that, coming home by moonlight from Holland House, his friend has been attacked by two highwaymen in Hyde Park, and all but slain by the pistol of one of them

"I sincerely rejoice at your Deliverance", writes the poet, "and hope soon to tell you so in town, but in the meantime should be glad to know from Yourself how it happened, and how it feels when one returns back from the very Brink of Destruction "

This last phrase is hardly a hyperbole, for Walpole had been stunned by the discharge of the pistol, and his face marked with shot "The ball", he says in the *Short Notes*, "went through the top of the chariot, and had I sat an inch nearer to the left side must have gone through my head" His assailant was the notorious James M'Lean or Maclaine, "the Ladies' Hero", a sort of "pinchbeck Macheath". Five years later the victim of the robbery made it the basis of a paragraph in an essay on Politeness which he then contributed to the *World* "The whole affair", he vows, "was conducted with the greatest good breeding on both sides" It was characteristic of Walpole that when Maclaine had to stand his trial in 1750 he not only refrained from giving evidence against him—for which abstention he was "honourably mentioned in a Grub ballad"—but stood aside while the fashionable world, male and female, thronged to Newgate "As I conclude he will suffer", he wrote to Mann, "and wish him no ill, I don't care to have his idea, and am almost single in not having been to see him"

Walpole began this year—1750—with a burst of enthusiasm for *L'Esprit des Lois*, which he thought "the best book that ever was written" More especially did "that glorious chapter" on the African slave trade appeal to him at a moment when "the British Senate, that temple of liberty", had been engaged in "pondering methods to make more effectual that horrid traffic of selling negroes". He despises the *litterati* of Florence "enormously, for their opinion of Montesquieu's book", and he is chilled and disconcerted by Miny's unresponsiveness to his "Gothic castle" project. Grecian architecture, he protests,

"is only proper for magnificent and public buildings Columns and all their beautiful ornaments look ridiculous when crowded into a closet or a cheesecake house " As the year advances his spirits seem to rise Neither the mild earthquake in February nor the more energetic one in March perturbed him greatly, though he watched with rather malicious amusement the hasty exodus from London of people more apprehensive than himself Chute, already appointed *Strawberry King-at-Arms*, was at this time occupied in concocting a resplendent pedigree for Mann, expressly devised to confound the sceptical and supercilious Florentines Provoked thereto "by the most impertinent usage", he also composed two somewhat caustic epigrams upon the two delinquent ladies, Lady Caroline Petersham and Miss Ashe This proceeding on his part inspired Walpole to string together ten pairs of scampering anapæstic lines upon Lady Bingley, a fast-fading beauty who had sent her maid to "every glassman in the town" in quest of a mirror which should give back a pleasing image of herself She is made to exclaim ruefully.

One us'd to have mirrors so smooth and so bright
They did one's eyes justice, they heightened one's white,
And fresh roses diffus'd o'er one's bloom—but alas!
In the glasses made now one detests one's own face!

To the same year belongs the *Epigram on Admiral Vernon presiding over the Herring-fishery*, a neat little thrust at an uncouth old object.

A somewhat brilliant though erratic new planet swam into Walpole's ken this summer in the person of Richard Bentley, the youngest son of the famous Master of Trinity "He has", declared his new friend, "more

sense, judgment, and wit, more taste and more misfortunes than sure ever met in any man" This "taste" of Bentley's, coupled with his skill as a draftsman, made him a very acceptable addition to the Gothicising group at Strawberry Not until 1761 did his "sense and judgment" so far fail him that his wit ceased to atone for their failure Cumberland, Bentley's nephew, gives as the reason for the ultimate breach, a noble reluctance on his uncle's part to endure Walpole's "patronage", Walpole himself confided to Cole that a contributory cause had been the ill-timed and persistent intrusions of Mrs Bentley at Strawberry Hill But indeed, the friendship had in it few elements of permanence, Walpole's "spirit of whim and folly" being met and equalled by that of Bentley It says much for the magnanimity of the rejected "patron" that twenty years later he was giving secret financial assistance to his quondam crony, and that for the benefit of Bentley's orphan children he placed a sum of money "in the funds"

Their "impertinent usage" of his friend Chute did not deter Walpole from frequenting the society of that fantastic pair, Lady Caroline Petersham and "the little Ashe", and few passages in his letters have been more often or more appreciatively quoted than his description of the visit he paid to Vauxhall in their train To that haunt of mirth they proceeded by barge, "with a boat of French horns attending and little Ashe singing". After divers skirmishes and encounters,

At last we assembled in our booth, Lady Caroline in the front, with the vizor of her hat erect, and looking gloriously jolly and handsome She had fetched my brother Orford from the next box, where he was enjoying

himself with his Norsal¹ and *petite partie*, to help us mince chickens We minced seven chickens into a china dish, which Lady C stewed over a lamp with three parts of butter and a flagon of water, stirring, and rattling, and laughing, and we every moment expecting to have the dish fly about our ears

In a postscript to this same letter Walpole tells Montagu that Dr Middleton had come to town, "to consult his physician for a jaundice and swelled legs" It was at this juncture that Almanzor Ashton launched an attack upon the dying man in a pamphlet entitled *A Dissertation on 2 Peter 1. 19*. "He (Ashton) has at last quite thrown off the mask," writes Walpole to Mann, "and in the most direct manner, against my will, has written against my friend Dr Middleton" Less than a week later Middleton was dead, and the old friendship between Celadon and Almanzor was as dead as he.

At the opening of the first parliamentary session of 1751 the Address to the King was moved by the member for Callington, who has taken no pains to inform posterity in what manner he acquitted himself of the task It was a delicate task, for it implied a full and formal endorsement of the policy and conduct of the two ministers whom he most heartily abhorred—Pelham and Newcastle The business before the House was the winding-up (this commercial phrase may well apply to a transaction so deeply tinged with commerce) of the war with Spain, and piquancy was lent to the debate by the unblushing recantation of

¹ "My brother Orford's" mistress was the daughter of that Jewish tavern-keeper who had resented Horace Walpole's sympathy with the Jacobite lords See *ante*, p. 92

Pitt, "who now exploded his own conduct in attempting to kindle the Spanish war".

It is with this session that Walpole's *Memours of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of King George II* begin. The *Short Notes* inform us that his original intention had been to write the history of one year only, and Gray's letter of December 1746 proves that he had played with the idea four years before putting it seriously into execution. Characteristically enough, no instructions as to the disposition of this somewhat explosive MS were left in Walpole's will. Together with the *Memours of the Reign of King George III* it was, in accordance with a detached Memorandum found loose among his papers, placed by his executors in a sealed box, and delivered to Lord Hugh Seymour, through whose hands it passed to those of the writer's great-grand-nephew, Lord Waldegrave, when his lordship reached the age of twenty-five. In 1822 the earlier *Memoirs* were prepared for the press and published by Henry Fox's grandson, Lord Holland, twenty-three years later Sir Denis Le Marchant brought out those dealing with the reign of George III.

Despite the malicious art of the portraits and the occasional liveliness of the narrative, Walpole's *Memoirs* do not satisfy those of his readers who find an incomparable charm in his more gracious and whimsical prose. They lack perspective. At times they almost justify Macaulay's assertion that the conformation of the writer's mind "was such that whatever was little seemed to him great, and whatever was great seemed to him little". The pervading atmosphere of malice, self-seeking, and chicane detracts much from the pleasure which the best-knit and best-balanced scenes

and characters might otherwise afford. Writing in the *Quarterly Review*, John Wilson Croker declares that the George II *Memoirs* were "written under all the excitements of party feeling, offended vanity, and personal disgust", and describes them as "a party pamphlet in two quarto volumes". There is, perhaps, some tinct of truth in his contention that towards all his fellow-creatures except Conway "Walpole seems to have had the feelings of a tiger-cat, now sportive, now cruel". This stainless critic is shocked at the gross and fulsome flattery of the *Character of Henry Fox*, which he imagines to have been written shortly before it was published in an "extraordinary number" of the *World*, that is to say, at a time when the panegyrist was confiding to the unborn readers of his *Memoirs* a view of Fox startlingly at variance with that expressed in the *Character*. We now know that the more pleasing portrait was written, and sent to Lady Caroline, eight years before. In 1756 it was a resuscitation, though not, perhaps, a particularly creditable one, under the circumstances.

In March 1751 died Frederick, Prince of Wales, of whom the *Memoirs* say that "he resembled his pattern the Black Prince in nothing but in dying before his father". In March, too, died the second Earl of Orford, leaving an erratic but not altogether unattractive son, that third Earl who, whether in his wits or out of them, was fated to be so great a problem and anxiety to his youngest uncle. The same doomful month saw the untimely demise of Chute's nephew, Francis Whitehed, and then arose what the *Short Notes* describe as a "great family quarrel". Poor Whitehed had been betrothed to an heiress, Margaret

Nicoll, and Chute had "engaged" her "to run away from her guardians, who had used her very ill", and had "proposed to marry her" to Lord Orford, "who refused her, though she had above 150,000l". This refusal appalled Walpole, who had dreamed of retrieving the family fortunes in this sublimely simple manner, of saving the precarious splendours of Houghton, and of restoring and establishing "all our glory"

Apart from the *Memours*, Walpole's literary activities were not extensive during 1751. In the late summer of that year he submitted to Gray the first draft of a fable "imitated from La Fontaine", *The Funeral of the Lioness*, afterwards retouched in accordance with the poet's criticisms. Even then, the captious Gray found that there was "still something a little embarrassed here and there in the expression". His verdict suggests that as a standard of comparison he was using La Fontaine himself, for Walpole was responsible for many less effective *jeux d'esprit* than this, though he lacks the limpid lyrical grace wherein lies the chief charm of his French model, and has not the art to combine irony of concept with bland simplicity of phrase.

The "gracious tawny queen" of the jungle being dead, we are told that

The widow'd monarch much was grieved,
and

A solemn pomp of funeral rites
He orders, and his peers invites,
By sound of trump and heralds grave
To meet at the cathedral-cave

Each shaggy baron and his dame
From distant wood and highland came,

And much they gossip of the queen,
Of tickets, places, bombazeen,
And much they press and crowd to show
At once their dignity and woe

These are surely the accents of Gay rather than of
La Fontaine!

With admirable unanimity and decorum, the
"savage nation" lamented Only the stag, whose
wife and son had fallen a prey "to her imperial high-
ness' claws" held aloof and "joy'd for what the public
groan'd" This being reported to the royal widower,
he exclaims —

Boh! What, not sorrow for a queen!
Was ever such a traitor seen?
Call all my guards, my grenadiers,
Call my own regiment of bears!
He dies this hour, and piece-meal torn
Shall teach rebellion how to mourn

The resourceful stag, however, has an
ready of such extravagant softness that even royal
wrath is not proof against it He declares that he has
been vouchsafed a vision of the dead lioness

to my enraptured sight,
Her mane and whiskers streaming light,
Like sainted Francis, late appear'd
Your gracious spouse, our queen rever'd
Her flapping tail and purr sedate
Bespoke her soul's Elysian state,
When thus she said, My friend, beware,
Lest what the king's connubial care
Of pomp intends betray thy eye
To drop the tear, or breast to sigh
While my ecstatic soul refin'd
From grosser cares of mortal kind,
Nor meditates the Libyan chase,
Nor mourns to leave my orphan race,
But where Elysian waters glide,
With Clarke and Newton by my side,

Purrs o'er the metaphysic page,
Or ponders the prophetic rage
Of Merlin, who mysterious sings
Of men and lions, beasts and kings

This ingenious *apologia* was received with acclamation by the crowd and with favour by the king, who

Stood on four tiptoes, grasp'd his sword,
Strutted, prepar'd to be ador'd,
And gave the stag to kiss the paw
He fancied held the world in awe

Did Gray detect in the image of Walpole's lioness a vague and indistinct reflection of his own Selima? For the two are assuredly "sib"

In the same letter that praises and yet censures the final form of this fable, Gray has much to say concerning his friend's project that Dodsley should publish half a dozen of the *Odes*, with illustrations by Bentley. "Our charming Mr. Bentley", Walpole tells Montagu, is "drawing vignettes for his (Gray's) *Odes*. What a valuable MS I shall have"! Gray himself remonstrated half-playfully with him for his excess of zeal

"I do not wonder at Dodsley," he wrote later. "You have talked to him of six *Odes*, for so you are pleased to call everything I write, though it be but a receipt to make apple-dumplings. He has reason to gulp when he finds one of them only a Long Story"

In July Walpole tore himself away from the delights of Strawberry Hill in order to visit his Hertford cousins at Ragley, taking Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon in his stride. "The glorious chapel of the Beauchamps" set his Gothic pulses thrilling, but Stratford left him cold, it was "the wretchedest old town" he had ever seen. Moreover, a "bountiful corporation" had

"exceedingly bepainted" Shakespeare's bust "Lady Caroline Petersham is not more vermilion!"

"I sit down", wrote Walpole in his *Memoirs* at the outset of 1752, "to resume a task for which I fear posterity will condemn the author at the same time that they feel their curiosity gratified." He is afraid of being thought over-censorious, he imagines ironically in what terms he might write of George II, of Pelham, of Newcastle, were he to "comply with this indulgent taste" for idealised portraits "Avaunt, Flattery!" he ejaculates, "tell the truth, my pen!" His pen found the task of truth-telling so laborious that it had little leisure for lighter employments, and did not trip again in rhyme until, in 1753, he wrote a burlesque poem, *The Judgment of Solomon*, which was never printed. 1752 was a year of politics and prose. It brought Walpole a new responsibility, however. By Sir Hans Sloane's action in making him a trustee under his will, he became one of the guardian-god-fathers of the British Museum.

A burglary at Arlington Street—vividly described in a letter to George Montagu—lent excitement to the month of June 1752, and for the greater part of the summer Walpole's bachelor establishment was unwontedly enlivened by the presence of a three-year-old child, Anne, the daughter of Conway and his charming Countess, and the future inheritrix of Strawberry Hill. In August he again dared the barbarous wilds of Kent and Sussex in Chute's company, visiting Knowle (where he found both the park and the embroidered bags lying on velvet tables "sweet"), Tonbridge, Bayham Abbey, Hurstmonceaux, and Penshurst. At Hurstmonceaux "we walked up a brave old avenue to

the church", he tells Bentley, "with ships sailing on our left hand the whole way", the castle pleased them, even to its "long, lean Saints" in painted glass, but Penshurst spelt disillusionment "The park seems never to have answered to its character, at present it is forlorn, and instead of Sacharissa's cypher carved on the beeches I should sooner have expected to have found the milk-woman's score "

One of the main charges in Macaulay's indictment of Horace Walpole is to the effect that "his judgment of literature, of contemporary literature especially, was altogether perverted by his aristocratical feelings" He was certainly lacking in appreciation for those of his coevals whom posterity has most delighted to honour, and it was certainly unfortunate that so many of them should have represented in themselves one or more of the four things which he most intensely disliked—bad manners, Toryism, noise, and grime (In his eyes it is obvious that Johnson embodied all four) Macaulay, who belongs to that school of criticism which cannot set up one image without incontinently knocking down another, waxes very wroth because Walpole ranks among the "first writers" of his day that little company of more or less well-bred wits who, between 1753 and 1756, contributed to Edward Moore's periodical *The World* Cambridge, Coventry, Whitehed, and Lord Bath may have faded into the shadows now, Soame Jenyns, despite the agreeable quality of his verse and of his lighter prose, may be remembered only as the butt of Johnson's disdainful rhetoric, but it is surely a strange proposition that Chesterfield "stands much lower in the estimation of posterity than if his letters had never been pub-

lished", and Chesterfield, together with Walpole himself, was the brightest star in Moore's somewhat tinselly constellation.

Between February 1753 and September 1756 Walpole contributed eight essays to the *World*, to these must be added two, printed in his collected *Works*, which were still in manuscript when the paper ceased to exist, and the separately-published *World Extraordinary* containing the character of Henry Fox. The earliest, signed "Julio", deals very pleasantly with the reviving taste for nature and realism. Real waterfalls appear now on the stage, "real monsters from Afric" will doubtless replace the counterfeit serpent and ostrich in *Orpheus and Eurydice* and *The Sorcerer*, "the fair part of creation" is moved "to display their unveiled charming tresses, and, if I may say so, are daily *moulting* the rest of their cloaths." Gardens and dinner-tables alike reflect the fashionable whim, "there is not a citizen who does not take more pains to torture his acre and half into irregularities than he formerly would have employed to make it regular as his cravat", while at dessert one sees "cottages and temples arise in barley-sugar"—a somewhat peculiar example of realism! That moth-eaten *roi en exil*, Theodore of Corsica, over whose grave in St Anne's Churchyard, Soho, Walpole afterwards erected a monument, is the theme of the second *World* essay. The third—a charming one—deals with the revision of the calendar, and is fragrant with the breath of that Glastonbury thorn which blossoms anew in so many of the *Letters*. "Had I been consulted", says the essayist, gravely "(and mathematical studies have not been the least part of my speculations), instead of turning the calendar

topsy-turvy by fantastic calculations, I should have proposed to regulate the year by the infallible Somersetshire thorn " He is perturbed at the possible effects of the change upon such national festivals as All Fools' Day and St Swithin's "Were our astronomers so ignorant as to think that the old proverbs would serve for their new-fangled calendar?" he asks "Could they imagine that St Swithin would accommodate his rainy planet to the convenience of their calculations?" In the graceful little discourses upon letter-writing, and upon the inflated wealth of the age, Walpole the antiquary makes his presence known, citing examples, colourful or grotesque, from Froissart and Dugdale, and even quoting a delectable letter from Maximilian I to his daughter Margaret in the original archaic French The slightly less pleasing essay on the superior charms of ladies of mature years is interesting chiefly as having provoked a *boutade* from the Clive, which is thus recorded by the essayist .

I met Mrs Clive two nights ago, and told her I had been in the meadows, but would walk no more there, for there was all the world " Well," says she, " and don't you like the *World*? I hear it was very clever last Thursday "

The airy lightness of Walpole's touch, the delicate, dry sparkle of his wit, lend to these papers in the *World* a peculiar and very characteristic "bouquet". It is never in his power to be impersonal for long, not even when he travesties himself by writing now as a mathematical expert, now as a man ill-versed in the epistolary art. The last published essay, on Suicide, is distinctly Addisonian in form and colour, the two published only in the *Works*, and dealing with the

superfluity of books in existence, tend to be a trifle heavy, and the second is interesting mainly as affording evidence that Walpole's love of Chinese history, which afterwards found expression in the *Letter of Xo Ho* and certain of the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, was alive and active at the time when the *World* was in the throes of dissolution

The choice of tutors and governors for the young Prince of Wales, the future George III, had been the occasion of much political manœuvring, and towards the end of 1753 occurred the so-called "Ravensworth affair" Lord Ravensworth, among other persons likely to be alarmed, received a memorial, "pretended to have been signed by several Noblemen and Gentlemen of the first rank and fortune", implying, if not explicitly alleging, that three men in the Prince's entourage, Andrew Stone, the Honourable William Murray, and Johnson, Bishop of Gloucester, were nothing better than crypto-Jacobites Thirty-eight pages of the *Memoirs* are devoted to this fabrication and to its various repercussions, but only in a laconic footnote does Walpole reveal that the fabricator was himself One is tempted to regret that he should have given the secret away, though in his own circle it may have been a *secret de Polichinelle*. Bubb Dodington knew it, and he was not notably taciturn

After a brief glance at this distinctly discreditable episode, it is pleasant to breathe again the clearer air of Strawberry Hill Thither, in the spring of 1754, Nollkejumskoi betook his ponderous self "I can't conceive how he entered it," Walpole told Bentley "I should have figured him like Gulliver, cutting down some of the largest oaks in Windsor Forest to make

joint-stools in order to straddle over the battlements and peep in at the windows of Lilliput " The pond, Poyang, was already gay with goldfish, and in the summer of the same year, Walpole was sending some of these to Conway Concerning them he says, in an engagingly "Horatian" passage

The fish are apprised that they are to *ride* over to Park Place, and are ready booted and spurred, and the moment their pad arrives they shall set forth I would accompany them on a pillion if I were not waiting for Lady Mary, who has desired to bring her poor little sick girl here for a few days to try the air You know how courteous a knight I am to distressed virgins of five years old, and that my castle-gates are always open to them.

Under the date 1754, the *Short Notes* record that Walpole was "chosen for Castle Rising in Norfolk in the new Parliament", that "about the same time" he erected in Westminster Abbey the monument to the memory of his mother for which he had had the statue carved in Rome, and that in July of that year he "wrote *The Entail*, a fable in verse" It is to this last composition that Macaulay alludes, when he rebukes Walpole for having first scoffed "at the practice of entail", and then "tasked the ingenuity of conveyancers to tie up his will in the strictest settlement" The consistency thus inferentially demanded would have been superhuman indeed Walpole's love for "Strawberry" became by degrees the ruling passion of his life, replacing long before he died all the "old loves with wearier wings" that had once been able to catch, if not to hold, his fugitive heart He called it "a plaything, a vision that has amused a poor, transitory mortal for a few hours, and that will pass away like its master";

he saw, with a prophetic eye, its towers abandoned, its treasures dispersed,¹ its cloisters trodden by the feet of strangers Yet he would neither have been more convincing as a philosopher nor more likeable as a man if he had acquiesced in these things, and if he had inertly relinquished "Strawberry", and all that it had meant to him, and all that he had made of it, to obliteration Macaulay's view seems to be that he should have died intestate for no other reason than that he had composed, more than forty years before his death, this pretty, flimsy "fable in verse".

The "hero" of *The Entail* is a "butterfly divinely born" who establishes himself very comfortably on "the rich bosom of a rose"

The palace pleas'd the lordly guest,
What insect own'd a prouder nest?

He thinks the thorns embattled round
To guard his castle's lovely mound,
And all the bush's wide domain
Subservient to his fancied reign

This "lordly guest" was, however, not a little perturbed when

. . . in his mind's capacious eye
He roll'd the change of mortal things,
The common fate of flies and kings,

and bethought him that "these roofs" might pass to inheritors not of his own race In light verse of this whimsical order Walpole excelled, and if he had worked the vein to better purpose, he might have written an elfin epic fully as charming as *Nymphidia* That love

¹ These treasures were sold by auction in 1842, when the contents of the villa realised £29,615, 8s 9d, and the prints, disposed of separately, £3,837, 15s 6d

of the fantastic which emerges in so many of the best-known letters here finds expression in the lines describing how the butterfly proceeded to tie up his property

A caterpillar grovel'd near,
A subtle slow conveyancer,
Who summon'd, waddles with his quill
To draw the haughty insect's will
None but his heirs must own the spot,
Begotten or to be begot,
Each leaf he binds, each bud he ties,
To eggs of eggs of butterflies

At this juncture there appears upon the scene that interloper beloved of the fabulist, "a wanton boy", who not only, after the manner of his kind, pounced upon the hapless butterfly, but incidentally

Swept away the mansion-flow'r

During the spring and summer of this year, the Walpole butterfly at Twickenham had been beset with difficulties concerning his "mansion-flow'r". In April he told Chute, "that last time I went to Strawberry I found the stucco men as busy as so many Irish bees . . . but I soon made them undo all they had done". In November he had abandoned his castle for his eminently un-Gothic abode in Arlington Street, and was in politics up to his chin. Trouble was brewing, antagonisms were emerging, "these are greater storms than perhaps you expected", he writes gleefully to Bentley, "they have occasioned mighty bustle, and whisper, and speculation". Decidedly Horace the Politician was a less likeable fellow than Horace the Butterfly!

CHAPTER VII

THE "LETTER OF XO HO"—THE OFFICINA ARBUTEANA
—"ROYAL AND NOBLE AUTHORS"—"ANECDOTES
OF PAINTING IN ENGLAND"

WALPOLE's friends during his lifetime, and his critics since his death, seem to have accepted with little, if any, demur his estimate of himself as a fickle creature of a very uncertain temper. Yet in his dealings with Gray after their reconciliation, and with Bentley almost up to their severance, he showed extraordinary patience. Though Bentley began almost at once to disconcert and disappoint him, he was still, when 1755 dawned, eager for letters from Jersey, whither that erratic person had sought refuge from his creditors. For the moment Walpole was torn asunder by politics and frivolity, and he watched with a sort of amused detachment his own oscillations between these opposite poles.

In short, the true definition of me is that I am a dancing senator—not that I do dance, or do anything by being a senator—but I go to balls, and to the House of Commons—to look on—and you will believe me when I tell you that I really think the former the more serious occupation of the two—at least the performers are more in earnest.

He was at Strawberry Hill in April, "alone, out of

spirits and not well" A slow fever devoured him, he was worn to a skeleton—he who already looked so startlingly like one But, of course, this was only because he had taken so little care of himself during the winter, and had "kept such bad hours" Secure in this comforting conviction, and recking nothing of the *Via Dolorosa* of gout that now stretched before him, he soon recovered his spirits, cracked jokes about the imminent prospect of war with France, and—as the world of fashion was beginning to cast curious eyes at the Gothic castle—bestirred himself to entertain the Duke and Duchess of Bedford, and a large and admiring party, who breakfasted there to the music of Mrs Anne Pitt's French horns "placed in the corner of the wood"

In June a strange face appeared among the Twickenham pinnacles, and an alien voice was heard "Mr Muntz", writes Walpole to Bentley, "is arrived"

Muntz was a German-Swiss artist whose acquaintance Bentley had made in Jersey, and of whom he had written with enthusiasm to Walpole at the end of the previous year "Can he paint perspectives?" wrote Walpole in reply, "and cathedral-aisles, and holy glooms?" If he could, why, then, peradventure he might come to "Strawberry", and re-touch or complete Bentley's sketches, and depict the beauties of the vicinity It was a little disconcerting when Mr Muntz suddenly arrived, before any formal contract or agreement had been made between him and his employer, and with ten guineas in his pocket advanced to him by Bentley in the name of the unwitting Walpole Actually, this ingenious though indolent limner hung about Strawberry Hill until November 1759, when his

dismissal is recorded in the *Short Notes*. He had enjoyed, Walpole tells Montagu in a letter written on the morrow of the episode, "rool a year, my house, table, and utmost countenance. In short, I turned his head, and was forced to turn him out of doors." Muntz had been busy perfecting the Comte de Caylus's "new discovery of painting upon wax", and Walpole had not only written an account of it, but had held over the Strawberry Hill edition of Lucan's *Pharsalia* in order to begin the printing of his manuscript. A year later the ungrateful Muntz published his own description of the process under the title of *Encaustic, or Count Caylus's Method of Painting in the Manner of the Ancients*.

Another new planet in the summer sky of 1755 was Garrick, whose acquaintance Walpole professed to be willing to cultivate for the sake of his "poor neighbour" Kitty Clive. Kitty, one would have imagined, was quite capable of fighting her own battles, and, despite their bickerings, it does not seem that the friendship between her and Garrick required to be buttressed from without. In August Walpole was at Mistley again, in September he was Chute's guest at The Vyne, whence he went with his host on a jaunt to Winchester and Netley. The "smugness" of the cathedral pleased him only a little less than did "the beautiful fretted roofs" of the ruined Abbey. Of both he writes to Bentley with enthusiasm. In the same letter he remarks,

Gray has lately been here. He has begun an ode which if he finishes equally will inspire all your drawing again. It is founded on an old tradition of Edward I. putting to death the Welsh bards.

For the remainder of the year his heart is rather unequally divided between Parliament and his plantations. Already his erratic nephew was giving him trouble, and had made it necessary for him to write a strong remonstrance concerning a matter in which he considered himself to have been "very ill used" by him—the matter of a contested election in the Commons. The petty side of politics remains oddly fascinating to him, but in November he is writing very learnedly to George Montagu of Weymouth pines, Carolina cherries, Virginia cedars, and Spanish brooms. A week later he was one of the auditors in the House when "Single Speech" Hamilton "spoke for the first time and was at once perfection." Before the year closed his mortal enemy had come into the open and declared itself. "Alack! I have had the gout!" he exclaims ruefully, in a letter to Bentley. "I would fain have persuaded myself that it was a sprain, and, then, that it was only the gout come to look for Mr Chute at Strawberry Hill, but none of my evasions will do."

From a literary point of view the year that followed was singularly barren. Any time which he could spare from politics Walpole spent chiefly in hovering round the death-bed of Mann's amiable brother "Gal", at Richmond. Even his collecting zeal ebbed a little, though he wrote to Conway early in 1756.

You would laugh if you saw in the midst of what trumpery I am writing. Two porters have just brought home my purchases from Mrs Kennon the midwife's sale. Brobdnang combs, old broken pots, pans and pipkins, a lantern of scraped oyster-shells, Turkish pipes, Chinese baskets, etc. My servants think my head is turned.

In August, the gossip-mart at Westminster being closed, he went northward on "a journey of amusement" which proved "very amusing", as "sights", that is to say, country seats, ruined Abbeys, and "savage scenes" are "thick sown in the counties of York and Nottingham" Two months later, when Montagu bade him give an account of himself, he wrote from Strawberry Hill

I am quite alone, in the morning I view a new pond I am making for goldfish, and stick in a few shrubs or trees wherever I can find a space, which is very rare in the evening I scribble a little all this mixed with reading that is, I can't say I read much, but I pick up a good deal of reading

Newcastle resigned in October, and Pitt, having rejected the royal suggestion of a Pelham-Fox coalition, took office under the figure-head premiership of the Duke of Devonshire The first problem with which the new administration found itself confronted in 1757 was incarnate in the perturbing person of Admiral Byng Seven months earlier Byng's failure to relieve Minorca had roused the nation at large to unreasoning fury The court-martial, which sentenced him to death for negligence but acquitted him of the cognate charges of disaffection and cowardice, added to their sentence a strong recommendation to mercy, but the people turned *their* thumbs down, and George II, at one with them for once in a way, turned down *his* In the *Short Notes* it is recorded "In Feb 1757, I vacated my seat for Castlerising in order to be elected for Lynn" (this step was necessitated by the death of the recently-ennobled "Uncle Horace") "and about the same time used my best

endeavours, but in vain, to save the unfortunate Admiral Byng”.

Croker, in the *Quarterly Review* article referred to above, remarks that Walpole's conduct in this affair “is perhaps the most admired, if not the only admired, portion of his life”, and, almost in the same breath, suggests that his motive might have been hatred of Byng's accusers rather than tenderness towards Byng. At the critical moment Walpole, having relinquished Castle Rising without having yet taken his seat for King's Lynn, was not a Member of Parliament. But, either by chance or design, he happened to be within the precincts of the House when the news circulated among the Admiral's friends that two members of the court-martial, Keppel and Norris, desired to be absolved from their oath of secrecy. The *Memoirs* describe vividly the episodes that followed, Walpole's breathless dash “up into the gallery” to ask Keppel if this were true, his hasty and vain appeal to Fox, his flight “down from the gallery” to urge Sir Francis Dashwood to intervene. In the event, Dashwood *did* intervene, and a bill designed to attain the desired result was passed by the Commons, only to be thrown out by the Lords. Well might Walpole write to Mann that in this “most complicated affair” he had been a “most unfortunate actor”, having protracted the Admiral's misery for a fortnight by what he had “meant as the kindest thing” he could do! *Pour encourager les autres*, poor Byng was duly shot, on the quarter-deck of the *Monarque*; and his would-be rescuer, after paying a slightly rhetorical tribute to his shade, plunged again into the narrow by-paths of politics which his soul loved best.

That curious predilection for Chinese history, first manifested when he was at Cambridge, now prompted Walpole to write—in an hour and a half, *he said*—*A Letter from Xo Ho, a Chinese Philosopher at London, to his Friend Lien Chi, at Peking*. Five editions of this clever piece of satire were exhausted in a fortnight. *Xo Ho* is equally respectable as a child and as a parent, for it was beyond doubt begotten by Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, and, almost beyond doubt, it begot in turn *The Citizen of the World*. Many footnotes are needed to make the text of the *Letter* comprehensible to-day: the opening paragraph, however, deals in generalisations, and is quite in the manner of "Descartes" and "Julio".

I have told thee, these people are incomprehensible, not only they differ from us, they are unlike the rest of the western world: a Frenchman has prejudices, has caprices, but they are the prejudices of his nation, they are the caprices of his age. A Frenchman has settled ideas, though built on false foundations: an Englishman has no fixed ideas, his prejudices are not of his country, but against some particular parts or maxims of his country: his caprices are his own: they are the essential proofs of his liberty.

During the early summer of 1757 Walpole found time to write introductions to the Catalogues of the picture-collections of Charles I., James II., and George, Duke of Buckingham, "transcribed by the late curious and industrious Mr Vertue". Then, under "June 25" comes this memorable entry in the *Short Notes*, "I erected a printing-press at my house at Strawberry Hill". To Chute he wrote on July 12:

On Monday next the *Officina Arbuteana* opens in form. The Stationers' Company, that is, Mr Dodsley,

Mr Tonson, etc, are summoned to meet here on Sunday night And with what do you think we open? *Cedite, Romani Impressores*—with nothing under *Græci Carmina*

The *Carmina* in question were *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* One thousand copies (Gray speaks of *two* thousand in a letter to "little Brown") were "Printed at Strawberry Hill for R and J. Dodsley in Pall Mall", at one shilling each Beneath the Pindaric motto ΦΩΝΑΝΤΑ ΣΥΝΕΤΟΙΣΙ on the title-page appears a somewhat indistinct engraving of the Gothic castle The Odes being Gray's and the press his own, Walpole naturally looked with an indulgent eye upon the attenuated quarto volume These poems, he told Mann, "are Greek, they are Pindaric, they are sublime! Consequently I fear a little obscure" The public perceived the obscurity without at the same time perceiving the sublimity, and the book hung fire Gray, however, was the richer and "Doddy" the poorer by the sum of forty guineas, and Walpole's transparent delight in his newest hobby drew from the poet a slightly patronising word of congratulation "The receipt is obvious, it is only Have something to do, but how few can apply it."

If Walpole had been the capricious creature that he—and his friends—half-believed he was, the Caslon type-metal would have been allowed to rust in the ponderous oaken hand-press of the *Officina Arbutcana* whenever the first excitement of the unfamiliar pursuit had spent itself Actually the press continued to function in its tree-shaded wooden cot until 1790, when some complimentary verses were struck off in honour of the Duke of Clarence, "young royal tarry-

books" being then moved to pay a visit to Strawberry Hill. It had long been the habit of "Elzevir Horace", as Conway nicknamed his cousin, to arrange that gay or gallant trifles in verse should be printed under the wondering eyes of his visitors, and delivered all hot from the press into their delighted hands. Much of this activity was puerile enough, and many of the pamphlets and booklets printed at Strawberry Hill had hardly more intrinsic value than the tradesmen's cards, and miscellaneous leaflets and labels, which Kirgate, the last printer, was suffered to produce there. Yet Walpole did good service to scholarship and archæology by printing the *Pharsalia* with Bentley Senior's notes, the two volumes of *Miscellaneous Antiquities*, the *Life of Lord Herbert of Cherbury* by himself, and Hentzner's *Journey into England*, nor can we dismiss as negligible, however crude they may now appear, his own antiquarian collections such as the *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors* and *Anecdotes of Painting in England*.

Walpole's first printer was a fantastic Irishman, Robinson by name, with "eyes more Richard the Third's than Garrick's own". After a brief reign of two years he was succeeded by one Farmer and he, in turn, by one Pratt. Finally, in 1765, Thomas Kirgate took charge of the press, and, more fortunate or more prudent than his predecessors, rooted himself firmly in the soil of Strawberry Hill. Walpole has been freely and frequently charged with culpable ingratitude towards this man because in his will he left him a legacy of one hundred pounds only. Kirgate himself posed as a much-injured person, and Septimus Harding the Pall Mall miniaturist, "dropping into poetry" on

his behalf, makes him take leave of the *Officina Aibu-teana* in these touching terms

On thee, my fellow Lab'rour dear,
My Press, I drop the silent Tear
Of Pity for thy Lot

"Silent" is excessive And Dr Paget Toynbee, in his notes to the *Journal of the Printing Office at Strawberry Hill*, has effectively disposed of Kirgate's claims on our compassion The punter did not die a poor man And he was certainly unworthy of the confidence reposed in him by his master during the years when he acted as his amanuensis Indeed, he made and preserved copies of certain passages in the letters to Mann which he knew that the letter-writer had desired and intended to suppress. An attempt to blackmail Walpole himself, or his executors, may have been contemplated—and even made It was not until 1810 that his daughter surrendered the transcripts to Mrs Damer, in whose presence they were destroyed

The War of the Austrian Succession had been lumbering along in a desultory manner for about a year when, in September 1757, the futile and ignominious English raid upon Rochefort took place That the raid itself was a fiasco Walpole could not deny, but he was very wroth when a Commission of Inquiry was set up to investigate the causes of the failure The Commission was "most unconstitutional and dangerous, nay, absurd"—for was not Conway one of the officers upon the staff of Sir John Mordaunt, the leader of the expedition? "Between Hammersmith and Hyde Park Corner" Conway's indignant kinsman dashed off five quatrains, which through medium of his deputy at the Exchequer he was able to insert anonymously

in the *Public Advertiser*. Of this "most hasty performance" the second is the worst stanza

While hostile squadrons round thee stood
On Laffelt's unsuccessful field
Thy captive sabre, drench'd in blood,
The vaunting victor's triumph seal'd

In October Hentzner's Journal was printed at the Officina Arbuteana, and the manuscript of *Royal and Noble Authors* completed. Small wonder that Walpole's over-taxed eyes gave him trouble about this time, and that he suffered a brief panic lest they should fail him altogether! Chute's ministrations with a mixture of spirit of lavender and Hungary water gave him temporary relief, but a few weeks later he was writing dejectedly to Mann "everything makes me think myself old since I have worn out my eyes." Whatever the nature of this recurrent eye-trouble may have been, it left his sight unimpaired, and, according to the testimony of Madame du Deffand's informants, had no effect upon the brilliance of his eyes. Early in 1758 he records an improvement, following upon a régime of old rum and elderflower-water, and the immersion of his head every morning in a pail of cold water. For cold water, applied both without and within, Walpole had a passion which his contemporaries regarded as little less than insane.

When the New Year dawned, preparations for the printing of *Royal and Noble Authors* were well under way. In April the book appeared, and Walpole tells Montagu a month later that it is "marvellously in fashion", to his "great astonishment". To Dr Birch, secretary of the Royal Society, he wrote, "The hurry in which it was written, my natural carelessness and

insufficiency, must have produced many faults and mistakes " Thus early in his career as an author did Walpole assume that pose which annoyed Macaulay so much—the light and airy pose of a mere amateur who amuses himself with first one literary or antiquarian pursuit and then another, but is willing to devote time, care, and labour to none. Actually he was the most indefatigable and industrious of men. The sum of his tangible achievement is astonishing, and he crammed into his "busy, hurried, amused, irregular way of life" an amount of solid hard work to which many a more serious and purposeful person might have pointed with conscious pride.

In the Advertisement prefixed to the *Royal and Noble Authors* Walpole "flatters himself that he offers to the public a present of some curiosity, though perhaps of no great value." It was not an exaggerated claim, nor can we regret that inconsistency, so severely condemned by Macaulay, which made it possible for him to nourish anti-monarchical and Republican sentiments, and at the same time to undertake researches into the history of crowned and coroneted scribblers. The pageant which he calls up is neither tawdry nor tedious, though some of the personages are dragged into it upon somewhat flimsy pretexts. In the vanguard marches *Cœur de Lion*, whose sonnets in the Vatican and Laurentian libraries Joseph Spence had helped Walpole to trace; Henry VIII comes third, on the strength of his polemical pamphlets, it would appear that his joyous ditty *Pastime with Good Company* was unknown to his sponsor. Elizabeth and James I and VI are inevitable examples, as is Mary, Queen of Scots, whose misfortune it was "to be born in the same

age, in the same island with, and to be handsomer than, Elizabeth" To Frederick, Prince of Wales, only a line and a half is conceded "he wrote French songs in imitation of the Regent, and did not miscarry solely by writing in a language not his own". The Noble, as distinct from the Royal, authors are a picturesque company, though Walpole pauses all too seldom to exercise his admirable gift for word-painting Digby, Earl of Bristol, is the model of one of his most neatly pointed and balanced portraits.

A Singular person, whose life was one contradiction He wrote against popery and embraced it, he was a zealous opposer of the court, and a sacrifice for it, was conscientiously converted in the midst of his persecution of Lord Strafford, and was most unconscientiously a pursuer of Lord Clarendon With great parts, he always hurt himself and his friends, with romantic bravery, he was always an unsuccessful commander He spoke for the test-act, though a Roman Catholic, and addicted himself to astrology on the birthday of true philosophy

The press was kept busy during the summer of 1758 Under the title of *Fugitive Pieces in Verse and Prose* Walpole printed a collection of his own scattered works, and dedicated it to Conway "I only desire", wrote "Elzevir Horace", closing the dedicatory epistle, "if I should be remembered by these idlenesses, that it may be known at the same time that you did not dislike them, and (which will do me still more honour) that our FRIENDSHIP was as great as our AFFINITY" *An Account of Russia as it was in the Year 1710* by Charles, Lord Whitworth, followed in October of the same year A month later Bentley produced a pamphlet, *Reflections on the Different Ideas of the*

French and English in regard to Cruelty,¹ "designed", writes Walpole, who supplied the dedication, "to promote a bill (that I meditated) of perpetual insolvency" This bill never found its way into the Statute-book, but Walpole's pity for "all prisoners and captives" remained active long after his project had been shelved Before the year closed a second edition of *Royal and Noble Authors* was published,² and the slightly disconcerted compiler had to endure for the first time the quill-pricks of professional reviewers While the *Critical Review* blamed his bias against the Stuarts, the *Monthly Review* blamed his bias in favour of his father, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* called the book "unintelligible" because, among other things, no mention was made of the fact that Francis I was King of France

All these experiments and experiences were made and endured against a constantly shifting background of political marches and counter-marches at home, and naval and military gains and losses abroad

In the late summer of 1758 Walpole was again at Ragley, where he had the good fortune to unearth a quantity of forgotten Conway papers of much historical interest, and where he encountered Mr Seward of Lichfield, whose Swan was then but a cygnet This excellent man was profoundly mystified when he saw his fellow-guest first in the lumber-room "all over cobwebs, and dirt, and mortar", then "on a ladder, writing on a picture", then "lying on the grass in the court with the dogs and the children", and, finally, in the place of honour beside their hostess at the dinner-table.

¹ Not printed at Strawberry Hill

² Not at Strawberry Hill

A letter written to Conway on his return from this sojourn in Warwickshire contains a sort of rehearsal of the first act of that little private comedy of which Walpole and Lady Mary Coke were the hero and heroine. While the friendship between himself and this fantastic gentlewoman lasted—and that was until 1773—he diverted himself by paying court to her with a whimsical excess of homage and adulation which no woman with a sense of humour or a sense of proportion could possibly have taken *au sérieux*, but which she accepted with unsmiling complacency. With her, as with Mistress Anne Pitt, Walpole was able to carry on this sort of pastoral-historical-tragical-comical flirtation quite safely, just because whatever absurdities the shepherd said or wrote were negatived by the eccentric gravity of the shepherdess.

"I find my little stock of reputation very tiresome, both to maintain and to undergo the consequences", Walpole writes to Montagu in October, "it has dipped me in *erudite* correspondences—I receive letters every week that compliment me on my learning—now, as there is nothing I hold so cheap as a learned man, except an unlearned one, the title is insupportable to me."

He is tired of everything "pleasure, virtù, politics, and literature, I have tried them all, and have had enough of them." That, of course, was only his fun. At the moment he was busy with the account of Count Caylus's encaustic and with Bentley's *Pharsalia*, and the year that followed was one of great activity, political, literary, social, and antiquarian.

Dr Spence comes on the scene in February 1759, when, with the amiable object of raising "a little sum of money" for one Hill, a tailor who had abandoned

his needle for a Greek lexicon and had lost heavily by the exchange, he wrote, and Walpole printed, *A Parallel of Magliabecchi and Mr Hill*. The parallel is not striking, but the "sum of money" was duly forthcoming. It was about this time that Walpole confided to Gray how "childishly unhappy" he had been about a little pamphlet defending *Royal and Noble Authors* from the onslaught of the *Critical Review* with such a superfluity of encomium, and such an audacious assumption of personal friendship, that his unhappiness seems neither discreditable nor strange. Three months later he had vexations of a different colour to endure, when "one Carter, who had been bred a surgeon", attacked him in a pamphlet where, according to the title-page, his "censures and arguments" were "examined and disproved, his false principles confuted and true ones established". At the moment Mr Carter's victim happened to be in a great flurry over the wedding of his favourite niece, Maria, and Lord Waldegrave. He had—or wished to think that he had—not a little to do both with the arranging of this alliance and the fixing of the settlements.

"I have", he writes to Montagu, "quite reconciled my Lady Townshend to the match by desiring her to choose my wedding clothes, but I am to pay the additional price of being ridiculous, to which I submit, she has chosen me a white ground with purple and green flowers."

The 1797 edition of Walpole's *Works* states that the *Parish Register of Twickenham* was written "about 1758", but he himself fixes the date as August 1759. It is an agreeable trifle, and the list of "remarkable persons" who at various times had lived at

Twit'nam, the Muses' fav'rite seat,
Twit'nam, the Graces' lov'd retreat,

is set forth with a light and deft hand That light hand, however, was soon busy with heavier employments In the summer of the previous year Walpole had purchased from George Vertue's widow for £100 forty volumes of the engraver's confused and ungrammatical, but none the less valuable, "MS. collections relating to English painters, sculptors, gravers, and architects". It was upon these notes that the *Anecdotes of Painting in England* and the *Catalogue of Engravers who have been born or resided in England* were based Between January 1 and August 14, 1760, the first volume of the *Anecdotes* was completed, seven weeks sufficed for the second volume, but the third, begun in January 1761 dragged on, owing to various preoccupations, until August of that year These three, dedicated to Lady Hervey, were printed at Strawberry Hill in 1762-63, and the *Catalogue* in 1763 The fourth volume of the *Anecdotes* did not emerge till 1780, and, "sweet Molly Lepel" having long passed into the shades, the dedication is to Conway's stepson-in-law, the Duke of Richmond Neither the *Anecdotes* nor the *Catalogue of Engravers* can be said to possess the quaint colour of the *Royal and Noble Authors*, but the former augmented and annotated by the Rev. P. Dallaway, and the latter by Ralph Wornum, have been a veritable mine of picturesque and useful information to connoisseurs since they were re-published in 1876.

The otherwise delectable summer of 1759 was marred for Walpole by the long-drawn-out death-struggle of his left-handed kinswoman Mrs Leneve. When the end came, he was "worn out", and glad to

seek refuge first at Chalfont, at the house of his sister Lady Mary Churchill, whither Bentley accompanied him, and then at Park Place, Henley, the home of Conway and his Countess

Pitt's towering genius had now begun to exercise its influence upon the fortunes of England on land and sea. Victories had come tumbling upon each other's heels, Lagos and Quiberon, Minden and Quebec. "Mr Pitt", says Walpole, in his *Memoirs* at this period, "had done for Britain more than any orator for Rome. Our three last campaigns have over-run more world than they conquered in a century." On the eve of the battle of Quiberon Bay he was moved to compose a carefully-thought-out epistle congratulating the minister on the lustre he had "thrown on this country." It is not quite superfluously that he adds,

Sir, do not take this for flattery, there is nothing in your power to give that I would accept, nay, there is nothing I could envy but what I believe you would scarce offer me—your glory

Not to be outdone in politeness, Pitt promises in his reply that Walpole's letter shall take its place in his library "between Pliny and Voiture, to the no small Jealousy of Both".

During the rigorous winter which followed the delectable summer of 1759 Walpole was—or professed to be—mildly perturbed by the increasing favour manifested towards him by Prince Edward, Duke of York, erewhile the "very plain boy with strange loose eyes" who had shone as the most original and intelligent of poor Titus's sons. "He makes everybody make suppers for him to meet me," Walpole tells Montagu,

"for I still hold out against going to Court" The rigours of the winter were no check to the night-long frivolities of himself and his loo-playing feminine friends, but it is to the "violent, bitter weather" and not to these dissipations that he ascribes the severe fit of gout which laid him low early in 1760, when "he took enough bark to have made a rind for Daphne" The trial of Lord Ferrers for murder and the court-martial upon Lord George Sackville for cowardice in the field loom large in the letters of this period, and in March a recurrence of his rhyming humour prompted a *Dialogue between two Great Ladies* In April he is informing Sir David Dalrymple (afterwards Lord Hailes) of the enthusiastic interest felt by Gray, Mason, and Lord Lyttleton in certain examples of "Erse elegies" which were, in fact, the first instalments of Macpherson's *Ossian* July found him again at Chalfont, whence he went to Oxford with Conway, and spent four days "most agreeably" That "strong young lad", Lord Beauchamp, who acted as their cicerone, was worn almost to tatters by their tireless zeal The result of all this trotting and tripping was another attack of gout "You see," writes the victim ruefully to Lord Strafford, "leanness and virtue are no preservatives!" Yet such was the indomitability of the spirit pent in that attenuated frame, no sooner had he cast off his flannel wrappings than he was again flitting from one country house to another, and sighing, groaning, and exulting in turn over Wentworth, Chatsworth, Newstead, Hardwick, and Althorp. At Hardwick the portrait and the history of the famous Bess drew from him an unremarkable set of couplets, in which he records how

when death spoil'd each husband's billing
He left the widow every shilling

"For the house," he tells Strafford, "it did not please me at all; there is no grace, no ornament, no Gothic in it"

Princely condescension confounded Walpole still further before he had been re-established for many days at "Strawberry" It is to George Montagu that he relates what he qualifies as nothing less than a *calamity*

Last Friday morning, I was very tranquilly writing my *Anecdotes of Painting* I heard the bell at the gate ring—I called out, as usual, "Not at home," but Harry, who thought it would be treason to tell a lie, when he saw red liveries, owned I was, and came running up, "Sir, the Prince of Wales is at the door, and says he is come on purpose to make you a visit!" There was I, in the utmost confusion, undressed, in my slippers, and with my hair about my ears, there was no help, *insanum vatem aspiciet*—and down I went to receive him—him was the Duke of York Behold my breeding of the old court, at the foot of the stairs I kneeled down and kissed his hand I beg your uncle Algernon Sidney's pardon, but I could not let the second prince of the blood kiss my hand first

The dismay into which this royal visit threw Walpole would be amusing if it were not absurd. The author of the *Epistle to Ashton*, the demi-Republican who ranked the death-warrant of Charles I above Magna Charta, knew not which way to turn He "had not been in a Court these ten years", and consequently had "never kissed hands in the next reign", yet, being neither a great poet nor one of the late Patriots, he could neither "tell the world in rhyme that rudeness was a virtue", nor, "after laughing at kings and princes for twenty years, catch at the first opening of

favour and beg a place" Besides, as he "never dressed in summer", he had "nothing on earth but a frock", unless he went to Leicester House "in black, like a poet, and pretended that a cousin was dead, one of the Muses". The problem, of course, was not sartorial, but political and social Suspicion and derision must not be awakened in the Newcastle camp, the Prince of Wales must not be slighted when due courtesy was rendered to the Duke of York Through all this anxious babbling one detects a note of suppressed satisfaction, a note that becomes clearly audible in the postscript to the letter quoted above

If I had been told in June that I should have the gout and kiss hands before November, I don't think I should have given much credit to the prophet

Much credit would not have been due to him The gout was ungainsayable But on October 26 Walpole was writing again to Montagu, a letter whose opening cadences sound as if they were broken by a long sigh of relief

Was ever so agreeable a man as King George the Second, to die the very day it was necessary to save me from a ridicule? I was to have kissed hands to-morrow—

CHAPTER VIII

FUGITIVE VERSE—"THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO"—
MADAME DU DEFFAND

THE debt of Horace Walpole to George II was a double one. By his death the monarch not only extricated the subject from a position of some delicacy, but provided him with the material for one of the most—and most justly—admired letters that he ever wrote. The description of the obsequies of the second Hanoverian king deserves to rank with that of the trial of the Jacobite lords. Here, as there, characters and background, gloom and comedy, are touched with an unerring hand. When the ponderous purple-covered coffin has moved slowly under the torchlit arches to the chapel of Henry VII, we are allowed a glimpse of Nollkejumskoi's unwieldy figure looming over the open vault, and of the grotesque form of Newcastle, first shuffling to and fro, an eye-glass held to one eye and a handkerchief to the other, and then planting itself upon Nollkejumskoi's train "to avoid the chill of the marble." And all the time a beat of muffled drums and a tolling of bells are audible.

The beginning of the new reign gave Walpole an opportunity for a display of characteristic inconsistency. He, who had loudly proclaimed himself to

be a disinterested and unambitious man, a detached spectator of the human comedy, hastened to offer, through Bute, his services as a "virtuoso and antiquarian" to the young king. What visions he may have had of himself as a sort of hind let loose among the royal libraries and picture-galleries we cannot tell. There was no depth of earth either in Bute's mind or in his master's, the seed did not germinate, and the suggestion came to naught.

A contested election at King's Lynn made it necessary for Walpole to betake himself to Norfolk in March 1761. He stayed at Houghton, haunted incessantly by memories, and harassed for a space by the irruption of a party of sight-seers who "rode post through the apartments", whence he could hardly flee fast enough before them. At Lynn itself he had strange and arduous experiences to undergo, a mob to harangue, banquets and balls, with bumpers, huzzas, country dances, and sixpenny whist, to endure, aldermen and their womenkind to talk to, and—worst of all—the ordeal of being chaired and borne in triumph through the town.

Walpole's relief must have been great when he found himself back at "Strawberry", with leisure to concoct pretty trifles in verse and prose for the delectation of his favourite ladies. To Lady Mary Coke he wrote a mock sermon to dissuade her from going to the king's birthday, "as she had lately been ill". The departure for Italy of the Duchess of Grafton (afterwards the Countess of Upper Ossory of his later letters, and of the last he ever wrote), following hard upon a transit of Venus, suggested a happy trifle in which he declares that

The seer who foretold it mistook or deceives us,
For Venus's transit is when Grafton leaves us

Some seventy-five years since there was discovered among Grosvenor Bedford's papers, and published in the *Quarterly Review*, the original manuscript of *The Garland*, a "poem" concerning which the *Short Notes* say that it was sent to Lady Bute "but not in my own hand, nor with my name, nor did I ever own it" The *Quarterly* "has no doubt that this was another of Walpole's devices to facilitate the comfortable arrangement of his sinecures", though if this were so it seems strange that he should have been so secretive about it The figurative flowers composing *The Garland* include

Friendship that yields its fragrance but to those
That near approach it, like the tender rose,
As royal amaranths, unchanging truth
And violet-like the bashful blush of youth

It is therefore not a little disconcerting to find that, in the opening pages of the new series of *Memoirs* which Walpole began with the new reign, the king appears in anything but an amiable light, and the first anecdote related of him illustrates "that cool dissimulation in which he had been so well initiated by his mother, and which comprehended almost the whole of what she taught him".

Neither the coronation nor the wedding of the heavy-jowled, rose-and-azure young king proved very inspiring to Walpole's quill. He recorded his impressions of what he saw of each, and recorded them well, but that is all Already the gossip of the last reign had acquired a peculiar charm for him, and when the air was thick with babbling about Queen Charlotte's

stomacher, he "flew to my Lady Suffolk and heard her talk with great satisfaction of the late Queen's coronation petticoat" The society of this most colourless and inoffensive of George II's mistresses was very congenial to Walpole at this time, and he kept careful notes, for future use, of his conversations with her Between Lady Suffolk at Marble Hill, and Kitty Clive at Little Strawberry, he had no lack of that sort of tea-table tattle in which he delighted as much as any Dowager of Augustan comedy or fiction

Pitt's wholly indefensible conduct in accepting a pension for himself and a peerage for his wife drew from the scandalised Walpole a flat little epigram in verse, as did also Lady Mary Coke's attack of St Antony's fire on her cheek Much more pleasing is the *Portrait of John, Earl Granville*, of whom we are told that, wiser than Pyrrhus who

bade await
His revels till his conquests were compleat,
Our jovial statesman either sail unfurl'd,
And drank his bottle though he missed the world

The testimony of the *Short Notes* suggests that the ensuing year—1762—was a singularly barren one, though the testimony of the correspondence proves it to have been by no means inactive The completion of only one undertaking—the *Catalogue of Engravers*—is recorded, but the summer and autumn were enlivened by two literary squalls In June Wilkes, writing in his impudent anti-Bute organ, the *North Briton*, accused Walpole—on the slenderest evidence or none—of having flattered the Scots in *Royal and Noble Authors*. Four months later a rumour reached Strawberry Hill to the effect that

Bishop Warburton, resentful of "something in the chapter of Architecture in the second volume of *Anecdotes of Painting*", proposed to demonstrate his resentment in his forthcoming edition of Pope "On looking over the chapter", says Walpole, "I concluded he had writ some nonsense about the Phenicians", but the bellicose bishop, being interrogated at Walpole's request by Charles Lyttleton, now a brother-pielate, replied, "The Phenicians' no, no He alluded to my note in the edition of Pope, in which I have spoken of Gothic architecture I have exhausted the subject " Obviously there was nothing more to be said

Walpole's incredible physical activity was somewhat impeded by recurring attacks of gout during this year, as was his elasticity of mind by occasional fits of depression In February Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, then newly returned to England, and the Cock Lane Ghost, then the "reigning fashion", divide his attention Of the lady he notes that "her avarice, her dirt, and her vivacity are all increased", of the ghost, that "it would not pass muster in the paltriest convent in the Apennine". It was in the summer of 1762 that a renewal occurred of the acquaintance—begun at Eton—between himself and the Fenland antiquary, William Cole. This learned, gout-ridden, slightly eccentric, and oddly obsequious parson never entered the innermost circle of Walpole's friends, but contrived to hover on the outer margin until his death in 1782 With his prodigious knowledge of English antiquities and his readiness to oblige, he was a useful liegeman to Walpole, who frequently urged him to "quit Marshland" and "come to shore"—in the "county of Twicks" for choice.

Neither gout nor politics—his two chief ties—deterred Walpole from paying his usual sequence of country house visits this year. With the Ilchesters he made a “Gothic” tour in Dorset and Somerset, later he was at Park Place with the Conways, and then with the Waldegraves at Navestock. When Parliament reassembled, the desire of the Court for peace—*i.e.* for a majority in favour of the termination of the already languishing Seven Years’ War—and the desire of Henry Fox for power led to a working agreement between that unblushing *arriviste* and Bute. Under this agreement Fox was to lead the Commons, and, looking about for allies, he could not fail to perceive that the once enthusiastic “Horry” was holding aloof. Thereupon he wrote to him, offering the Rangership of St James’ Park and Hyde Park to the young Earl of Orford, whose “ruin” he thought the emoluments of the post “might, if not prevent, at least, procrastinate.” That it was a bribe he frankly admitted, and that it placed the recipient in a singularly awkward position he was well aware. Very discreetly Walpole replied that he could not “flatter himself with having the least weight with my Lord Orford”, and that he did not mean to be “involved in this affair otherwise than as a messenger.” The sequel was piquant. My Lord Orford “accepted the place, and never gave that ministry one vote afterwards.” Fox retaliated by delaying the payment of certain sums due from the Treasury to the Usher of the Exchequer. It was on this occasion that the intervention of Bute himself was sought—successfully—by Walpole.

Political complications and family troubles left Horace Walpole little leisure for his literary dabbings.

during 1763, and in the *Short Notes* he claims credit only for the "Dedication and Preface to Lord Herbert's *Life*" printed at Strawberry Hill a year later. Lord Waldegrave died in April, and it was at her uncle's house, not at her father's, that his young widow sought rest and seclusion in the first bitterness of her loss. If, however, the date given in the *Works of Lord Orford* be correct, it was upon the third day of this year that, at the request of Lady Suffolk, the delightful verses appointing the Countess Temple Poet Laureate to the King of the Fairies were written. (One of the productions of the *Officina Arbuteana* in 1764 was a slender volume of Lady Temple's pleasing but unremarkable lyrics.) It is impossible to read Walpole's verses in this kind without regretting that he did not write more of them, and without marvelling how he ever came to describe *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as "forty times more nonsensical than the worst translation of any Italian opera-books". Here he dips his own quill in moonlit dew, and himself usurps the very functions he allots to another. There is nothing "Gothic" about these leaves and flowers, no suggestion either of purbeck or of plaster. They are touched — though faintly — by the fresh wind that blows upon the meadows where Shakespeare and Herrick strayed.

The proclamation is made by

Oberon the grand,
Emperor of Fairy-land,
King of moonshine, prince of dreams,
Lord of Aganippe's streams
Defender of the sylphic faith

and he promises that when the lady whom he himself

has initiated into the "choicest secrets" of his art fills the "laureate's vacant seat".

A chaplet of immortal bays
Shall crown her brows and guard her lays,
Of nectar-sack an acorn cup
Be at her board each year filled up,
And as each quarter-feast comes round
A silver penny shall be found
Within the compass of her shoe,
And so we bid you all adieu

Given at our palace of Cowslip-
Castle, the shortest night of the
year.

When summer came, Walpole took the road again, this time with Cole as his companion. Their itinerary, which lay through Fenland, was modified by stress of weather, but they reached Peterborough, with which they were "not much pleased", and Cambridge, where they dined and drank tea with Gray. The completion of the Great Gallery at Strawberry Hill in September coincided with an influx of curious and—for the most part—uncomprehending sightseers. "Since my gallery was finished", writes Walpole ruefully to Montagu, "I have not been in it a quarter of an hour together, my whole time is passed in giving tickets for seeing it, and hiding myself while it is seen."

The grotesque and sinister figure of Wilkes loomed large as the year waned. To Walpole the demagogue was personally abhorrent; "abominable in private life, dull in Parliament." Yet suggestions that the rogue should have his ears cropped savoured a little too much of Tudor tyranny. The privileges of Parliament and the liberty of the press were involved. Wilkes alone was no name to conjure with, but to the

cry of "Wilkes *and* Liberty!" neither Walpole nor Conway could be deaf. Accordingly the cousins voted against the Court party, both in the November debates of 1763, and in the debates upon the legality of general warrants which convulsed the House in the early weeks of 1764. It was in April of the latter year, when the choleric young king had dismissed Conway from his military command and from his post as Groom of the Bedchamber, that Horace Walpole for the second time urged his cousin to share his fortune—or, at least, as much of it as he was free to alienate from himself. "I have six thousand pounds in the funds," he wrote, "accept all, or what part you want. Do not imagine I will be put off with a refusal." Conway, however, refused. And he was so little sensible of his kinsman's generosity—or, as he might himself have said, so far above considerations of that kind—that when the whirligig of time brought him and his party into power a year later he refrained from offering Walpole even the poorest simulacrum of office.

Conway's disgrace called into being a flood of pamphlets for and against him. To one of the second category his cousin replied in *A Counter Address to the Public on the late Dismissal of a General Officer*, written in May, but not published until August 2. Four days after its publication Walpole completed another and a very different undertaking. He wrote the closing lines of his "Gothic story", *The Castle of Otranto*. What was "the origin of this romance" he afterwards confessed in a letter to Cole.

I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream, of which all I could recover was that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head

filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it—add that I was very glad to think of anything rather than politics—in short, I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking in the middle of a paragraph.

It would be easier to underestimate than to exaggerate the importance of this "historical novel with the history left out", and to judge it fairly is impossible unless we realise that it was a bold and amazingly successful experiment in an absolutely untried medium. Other and far greater hands than Walpole's sowed the furrows he had driven, yet to his credit be it recorded that it was he who broke the first clod. If his castle, to our eyes, seems as insubstantial as any fastness of painted canvas wavering behind the stage of a village theatre, if his weapons and costumes suggest modern Wardour Street rather than mediæval Calabria, that is a trick of perspective. Otranto is dwarfed by Torquilstone and the Château d'If, and by the Notre Dame of Victor Hugo. To the dazzled eyes of Walpole's contemporaries it was an abode of terror, and wonderment, and beauty. A bardlet in the *St James's Chronicle*, addressing the "honourable and ingenious author", exclaimed—

By thee decoy'd, with curious Fear
We tread thy Castle's dreary Round,
Though horrid all we see and hear,
Thy Horrors charm while they confound!

Walpole himself loved Otranto "*Je vous avoue, ma petite*", he wrote to Madame du Deffand "*que de tous mes ouvrages c'est l'unique où je me sois plu*", and this probably remained true. It was his spiritual Strawberry Hill.

What are the main lines of the "Gothic story?" The exact date is left vague, but one or other of the Crusades is in progress when it begins. Manfred, Prince of Otranto, is enamoured of Isabella, the betrothed of his son Conrad. An ancient prophecy that "the castle and lordship of Otranto shall pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it" lends sinister significance to the sudden and fatal descent of a gigantic, black-plumed helmet upon Conrad. A young peasant who points out that the helmet resembles that of Alfonso the Good, "one of their former princes", as represented on his tomb, is promptly clapped into a dungeon. Manfred now determines to confine his wife, Hippolita, in a convent, and himself wed Isabella. Appalled, the damsel takes to flight, by way of "a subterraneous passage" communicating with the vaults of St. Nicholas' Church. Portents multiply. The plumes on the giant helmet wave. The portrait of Alfonso the Good sighs, descends from its frame, and vanishes into an upper chamber. Meanwhile Isabella wandering underground, meets the young peasant, who has escaped from his dungeon. He helps her to descend through a trap-door, but is himself caught by the pursuing Manfred, who is about to deal with him summarily when two servitors rush in. They have seen a gigantic, armour-clad foot and leg in the upper chamber. To divert Manfred's ardour from Isabella,

the priest of St Nicholas, Father Jerome, very unwisely encourages the tyrant's jealous suspicions of the young peasant. Being summoned to perform his ghostly office for the doomed youth, he catches sight of a "bloody arrow" on his shoulder, and hails him as his son. In his unregenerate days it appears that Jerome was a Sicilian noble, the Count of Falconara. Manfred offers him his son's life as a bribe—and the plumes on the helmet nod disapprovingly. A challenger now arrives, attended by one hundred gentlemen bearing, with difficulty, an immense sword. Isabella's father, Frederic of Vicenza, is presumed to have perished in the Holy Land, but the newcomer claims to represent him, demands that she shall be delivered up, and brands Manfred as a usurper—which, indeed, he is. Isabella, who in the interim has fled again, encounters Theodore, the young peasant, who has been set at liberty by Matilda, Manfred's daughter, wandering among gloomy lakes and caves. They are pursued by a knight whom they take to be a myrmidon of Manfred's and whom Theodore wounds severely before it transpires that he is Isabella's champion. The wounded man now reveals that he is also Isabella's father, and how, in Palestine, he had encountered a dying hermit, in digging whose grave—at a spot indicated by himself—he had unearthed the gigantic sword. On the blade were engraved these cryptic lines

in Where e'er the casque that suits this sword is found
With perils is thy daughter compassed round,
Alfonso's blood alone can save the maid
And quiet a long-restless prince's shade

They all return to the Castle, and Theodore relates

how he and his mother were carried away from Sicily by Algiers pirates, and how, after many hardships, he made his way to the coast of Calabria Both damsels are now in love with Theodore, but each is generously willing to surrender him to the other The curious suggestion of Hippolita that Frederic should marry Matilda is welcomed by nobody but Frederic himself Following his wife to the church of St Nicholas, whither she has gone to consult Jerome, Manfred is appalled to see three drops of blood fall from the carven nose of Alfonso the Good Bianca, the sharp-tongued waiting-woman of Matilda, next startles Frederic and Manfred by informing them that she has beheld a gigantic hand in armour "on the uppermost bannister of the great stairs" When Frederic goes to seek speech with Hippolita, he is confronted by a skeleton wrapped in a hermit's cowl—his old acquaintance of Palestine "What is thy errand to me?" asks Frederic, "What remains to be done?" "To forget Matilda," replies the apparition Matilda having stolen away to pray in the church meets Theodore there, and they being surprised by the jealous Manfred, who takes her for Isabella, a terrible tragedy occurs. Manfred plunges his dagger into the breast of his own child The way is now clear for the union of Theodore and Isabella The gigantic phantom of Alfonso the Good rises from the cracking walls of the castle It is he who has been growing too large for his environment, after the fashion of Alice in Wonderland when she had drunk from the bottle labelled "Drink Me", and before disappearing into the blue he cries aloud, "Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso!" Jerome explains His wife, Theodore's mother, was

actually a daughter of Alfonso the Good, who, during a brief sojourn in Sicily on his way to the Crusade whence he never returned, had married "a fair virgin named Victoria" It is impossible to withhold one's sympathy from Isabella, whom Theodore, all along *épris* with Matilda, marries only when he becomes convinced "that he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he could for ever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul"

Such, in its main outlines, is the story described by Lowndes, the publisher, to Fanny Burney as "snug", the story of which Macaulay says that "no reader probably ever thought the book dull", and which Scott ranked as "one of the standard works of our lighter literature" It was published in December 1764, but not as an original composition, or under the author's own name

"The following work", declares the preface, "was found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529"

On the title-page we read that it has been *translated by William Marshal, Gent, from the original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St Nicholas, Otranto* Not until a second edition was called for, in April 1765, did Walpole emerge The preface to this edition is one of the best he ever wrote, and contains a spirited defence of the Shakespearean trick of relieving tragic scenes with flashes of farce He even dares cross swords with Voltaire himself, and to combat the Frenchman's opinion that "this mixture of buffoonery and solemnity is intolerable" "Voltaire", says Walpole, hardly, "is a genius but not of

Shakespeare's magnitude " It was this second edition which her faithful swain dedicated in verse to Lady Mary Coke

When Lady Craven sent Walpole a sketch of the existing Castle of Otranto, he was fain to confess that he did not know it had ever existed He had "looked into the map of the kingdom of Naples for a well-sounding name, and that of Otranto was very sonorous" It was, and its reverberations are faintly audible even now

At Marble Hill, with her aunt, Lady Suffolk, lived a ten-year-old child, Henrietta Hotham, who seems to have been a favourite with Walpole For her amusement he wrote, in October 1764, the fable of *The Magpie and her Brood*, "taken from *Les Nouvelles Récréations de Bonaventure des Periers*, valet-de-chambre to the Queen of Navarre" It is a pleasing trifle, and the irregularity in the metre, and in the grouping of the rhymes, suggests the fluttering and twittering of the magpie and her argumentative young family As his saplings yellowed, Walpole's health declined "little fevers every night" and pains in his "heart and stomach" were warning him to "repair to a more flannel climate" He planned a trip to Paris in the early weeks of the New Year, but in the event he did not set out till September 9, 1765 This journey was, he declared, "the last colt's tooth" he intended to cut Before it came about, he underwent an ordeal of disillusionment whose reactions upon his feelings his contemporaries were not suffered to discern Only to ears unborn would Walpole unburden himself, but he does it freely in the second volume of the *Memoirs of the Reign of King George III*

On July 8, 1765, a new Whig ministry was formed, with Rockingham as first Lord of the Treasury, and Conway, the incomparable Conway, as one of the two Secretaries of State. It was natural—according to the standards of the time, it was by no means reprehensible—that Walpole should expect his cousin to be mindful of him in his hour of victory. In his hour of defeat he had been his fearless champion with tongue and pen, regardless of any possible revenge on the part of Conway's foes in office. And he had hoped that if the Whigs should some day return to power the payments of his place might be "settled on some foundation" that would not expose him to "the caprice or the wanton tyranny of every succeeding minister." This hope he had confided to Conway, when their party was in opposition. "He received it with silence," Walpole records, and he adds, no doubt sincerely, "It was not in my nature to repeat such a hint." When the ministry was in process of formation, Walpole chanced to be "in bed with the gout." It was Conway who reported to him "the proposed arrangement of places", and it was a bitter blow to him to find that his own name "had not been so much as mentioned." He would not have *accepted* a place—he had "frequently declared it"—but it would have been pleasant to have an opportunity to prove it.

How thoroughly soever he [Conway] knew my sentiments, was a compliment at least not due to me? Whatever was due to me, much or little, he totally forgot it, and so far from once endeavouring to secure my independence, in his whole life after he never once mentioned it.

All the king's horses and all the king's men could not set Hairy Conway up again. "Such failure of friend-

ship, or, to call it by its truer name, such insensibility, could not but shock a heart at once so tender and so proud as mine!" says Walpole. And, when he has marked how rewards have fallen thick upon men who had abandoned Conway to persecution "without a pang", he thinks he understands

He thought it noble, he thought it would be fame, to pardon the neglect he had met with, and that the world would applaud his generous return of their ungenerous behaviour. No glory would have accrued from his serving me, as it would have been natural, and no more than was expected. His heart was so cold that it wanted all the beams of popular applause to kindle it into action

Small wonder that Walpole, humiliated, disillusioned, yet wearing a gay mask before Conway and the world, should have been glad to escape from England. To Lady Hervey, who had given him letters of introduction to friends in Paris, he writes, "Alas, I am nothing but a poor, worn-out rag, and fear that I shall be forced to pretend I have had the gout in my understanding." Two days after his arrival he tells the same charming correspondent that the "gout is going off in minuet-step." And he relates how Lady Hertford, the English Ambassadors, has cut him to pieces and thrown him into a cauldron "with tailors, perwig-makers, snuff-box-wrights, milliners, etc." and how he has "come out quite new, with everything but youth."

Walpole's Parisian friends, both old and new, were fully as pleased with him as he with them.

"It is very charming", he remarks, "to totter into vogue, they humour me and fondle me so, and are so good-natured, and make me keep my armed chair and rise for

nobody, and hand out nobody, and don't stare at one's being a skeleton, that I grow to like them exceedingly "

His success swelled into a triumph a few weeks later when it became known that he was the author of a certain letter, purporting to be written by Frederick, King of Prussia, to Jean Jacques Rousseau, which had intrigued and diverted Parisian society as it circulated from hand to hand. In this letter Frederick invites his "*cher Jean Jacques*" to come to Prussia, "*mes états*", he says, "*vous offrent une retraite paisible*", and, by an admirable ironic touch, he adds, "*Si vous persistez à vous creuser l'esprit pour trouver de nouveaux malheurs, choisissez les tels que vous voudrez. Je suis roi, je puis vous en procurer au gré de vos souhaits*". This, the Princesse de Ligne informed Walpole, "was plainly the stroke of an English pen"

Among the introductions with which Walpole came armed were one to Madame Geoffrin from Lady Hertford, and one to Madame du Deffand from George Selwyn. As between these two rival *salonnières* his choice was soon made, he had only to weigh against the coarse good sense, shrewdness and vitality of Madame Geoffrin the undimmed "vivacity, wit, memory, judgment, passions, and agreeableness" of Madame du Deffand. When he first swam into her ken, Marie de Vichy-Chamrond, Marquise du Deffand, was sixty-eight, just twenty years his senior. For twelve years she had been blind. But the patrician grace, the finely-poised, ironical, sophisticated intelligence that charmed him in her lost nothing by this affliction. The fact that she had been for a brief space the mistress of the Regent, and could re-tell all the most piquant legends of a bygone reign, gave her the

aspect of a second—and a far more delightful—Lady Suffolk. Despite a slight recoil at first—when he described her as “an old blind *débauchée* of wit”—he appreciated and enjoyed in her certain qualities which were best calculated to please *him* of all imaginable men and Englishmen. In a letter to Gray he has traced a portrait of her as she was at the outset of their strange, distressful, and tenacious friendship.

She goes to operas, plays, suppers, Versailles, gives suppers twice a week, has everything read to her, makes new songs and epigrams, ay, admirably, and remembers every one that has been made these fourscore years. She corresponds with Voltaire, dictates charming letters to him, contradicts him, is no bigot to him or anybody, and laughs both at the clergy and the philosophers. In a dispute, into which she easily falls, she is very warm, and yet scarce ever in the wrong, her judgment on every subject is as just as possible, on every point of conduct as wrong as possible, for she is all love and hatred, passionate for her friends to enthusiasm, still anxious to be loved, I don't mean by lovers, and a vehement enemy, but openly.

Passionate for her friends to enthusiasm, still anxious to be loved—poor woman, she was both those things, and thence flowed all the corroding bitterness, as well as the unimagined sweetness, of her friendship with Horace Walpole. On her side it was no ordinary friendship. Its enduring quality, its half-fierce, half-wistful intensity, invest it with a queer pathos, and raise it above the level of a mere infatuation. And to Walpole, quivering with wounded pride, this ardent, enfolding affection must have brought a sense of solace and appeasement. Yet from the moment that he quitted Paris for London he was in a state of incessant apprehension lest he should thereby be made to look

ridiculous For this he has been chastised with scorpions by Mr Lytton Strachey On the other hand, these tremors may not have been wholly selfish There lay between him and Madame du Deffand not only the English Channel, but the highly-organised espionage system of the French and English Post Offices It was well that she should curb her enthusiasm, she must beware of golden phrases, of *emportements romanesques*, prudence must be her *mot d'ordre*, and she accepts it with touching docility in her first letter to him after that first return "*personne ne sera au fait de notre correspondance, et je suivrai exactement tout ce que vous me prescrirez*"

Throughout the whole course of this correspondence, which lasted till her death in 1780, the struggle continues between her ardour and his apprehensions She protests, laments, implores, denies, but ends always by submitting "*Ne m'inspirez pas tant de crainte, ni de respect,*" she pleads, but he pitilessly invokes both whenever her *emportements romanesques* become alarming Yet, after his fashion, Walpole was fond of his "dear old blind woman", and grateful to her It is true that even the verses which he wrote on receiving her portrait in 1766 emphasise the strictly philosophic character of their friendship On the other hand, it was for her sake that he returned four times to Paris—in 1767, 1769, 1771, and 1775 Then to feel again his quick little handshake, to hear his drawling "*po-int du tout, au con-tr-aire*", must have consoled the poor old lady for many snubs, then she would plan little surprises for him, a drawing-room recital by the Clairon, a peep through a borrowed telescope at an elusive comet, or

they would drive about the boulevards together in the grey of dawn

The total number of letters exchanged between them amounted to upwards of sixteen hundred Walpole's anxiety that *his* should be destroyed was extreme He pleaded his imperfect French, and the indiscretions in which he had indulged, and such of his letters as he did not personally retrieve he either persuaded Madame to burn, or recovered through Conway, when the incomparable Harry visited Paris Her letters to him were preserved at Strawberry Hill, and a selection of them, made by Miss Berry and rather energetically "edited", appeared in 1810 Owing to a misapprehension on the part of a French editor, an impression prevailed that the original manuscripts had been destroyed, but this was not the case They were discovered by the late Mrs Paget Toynbee in a Staffordshire country-house, and published by her, in three volumes, with most admirable notes, in 1912 Fifteen of Walpole's letters to Madame du Deffand escaped the destruction to which he desired that they should all be consigned Of these eleven are transcripts, made by the French Post Office spies whom he dreaded so much, and preserved, more or less by chance, in French official archives The French is passably good, considering that it was written by an Englishman, and the gossip is by no means sensational, but there is no "Horatian" charm of form or colour His wit, as he himself divined, would not survive translation

Horace Walpole, as Charles de Rémusat has well said, "*aima Madame du Deffand comme on pouvait l'aimer, et comme il pouvait aimer*" To his other

friends he spoke of her with affection, though always in phrases that appear to emphasise the discrepancy between her years and his. When political events in France seemed to threaten her pension of three thousand livres, he besought her most earnestly to suffer him to make good the loss. When she lay dying, he was genuinely concerned, and deplored that there was no possibility of sending her James's Powder in time to save her life, though he did not rush to her side, as Mr Lytton Strachey thinks he ought to have done. Her dog, Tonton, was an irascible little beast, but he kept with alacrity the promise he had made to take charge of it in the event of her death. And, when she died, he regretted her, as she had told him that he would, and for the reason that she gave in her valedictory letter "*Vous me regretterez*", she had written, "*parce qu'on est bien aise de se savoir aimé*."

CHAPTER IX

“AN ACCOUNT OF THE GIANTS”—“HISTORIC DOUBTS”
—“THE MYSTERIOUS MOTHER”—“NATURE WILL
PREVAIL”

FOR a time it was amusing, and even agreeable, to Horace Walpole to be “sent for about, like an African prince or a learned canary-bird”, in consequence of his faked letter to Rousseau, but as the year (1766) advanced, the thought of “Strawberry” in lilac-time began to tug at his heart-strings. A pilgrimage to Livry in April, though it satisfied his enthusiasm for Madame de Sévigné, only served to remind him that he was in a land to whose mutilated groves the spring would bring scant glory. “Strawberry alone”, he wrote to Cole, on his return early in May, “contains more verdure than the whole of France.”

The fascination which the idea of giants exercised over Walpole’s imagination did not exhaust itself in the massy phantom of Alfonso the Good. One of the most mordant of his satires, written in July 1766, was suggested by the reported discovery by Captain Byron of a race of gigantic men in Patagonia. In *An Account of the Giants lately Discovered* he satirised everything, and almost everybody, that he disliked—Methodism

and pedantry, Slavery and the Stamp Act, Whitefield and the Grenvilles. The machinery is unblushingly borrowed from Gulliver, yet here is none of the grim driving-force of Swift's irony, Walpole's remains airy and urbane, and is not malignant even when it is most malicious. With delightful gravity he discusses the possible origin of these Patagonian prodigies

are we to believe that tribes of giants sailed from Africa to America? What vessels wafted them? was navigation so perfected in the infant world that fleets enormously larger than any now existing were constructed for a race of Polyphemes? Or is it the climate that has ripened them, as Jamaica swells oranges into shaddocks, to this prodigious volume? Natural philosophers cannot account for it, therefore divines certainly can

In the penultimate paragraph he gives a sly dig at himself, but it is in the manner of Molière in *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, rather than in that of Swift's verses on his own death

Oh, if we could come at an heroic poem penned by a giant! We should see other images than our puny writers of romance have conceived, and a little different from the cold tale of a late notable author, who did not know better what to do with his giant than to make him grow till he shook his own castle about his own ears

Madame du Defland amused herself by playing a very pretty little trick on Walpole in the month of June, when she sent him a snuff-box ornamented with a miniature of Madame de Sévigné and accompanied by a letter purporting to be written by the shade of *Notre Dame des Rochers* herself. The recipient, as the sender had intended that he should, jumped to the conclusion that the actual donor was the charming

Duchesse de Choiseul When he discovered his error, he felt a little foolish, and, as he confessed to Lady Hervey, "scolded Madame du Deffand black and blue" In the same letter he sends her ladyship a neat, flippant set of verses, inspired by a tale in the *Dictionnaire des Anecdotes* "taken from a German author"

Meanwhile the reverberations of the famous faked epistle had not died down, and the perpetrator of the hoax was fain to come to the rescue of David Hume, suspected by Jean Jacques of complicity "I should be very sorry to have you blamed on my account," Walpole writes to the historian, in a letter which he explicitly authorises him to cite, "I have a hearty contempt for Rousseau, and am perfectly indifferent what the *litterati* of Paris think of the matter" Yet when Hume printed the letter, he was both disconcerted and annoyed

A violent attack of gout in the late summer drove Walpole to "the Bath", a town which he disliked "exceedingly", perhaps on account of the pervading Pulteney atmosphere The waters did him good almost in his own despite, and he heard Wesley, "wondrous clean, but as evidently an actor as Garrick", preach in a neat chapel "with true Gothic windows", and had speech with Chatham, who asked him to move the Address in the Commons This request he received without enthusiasm He had determined to give effect at last to his oft-proclaimed intention of retiring from Parliament On March 13, 1767, he wrote to the Mayor of Lynn tendering his resignation He had heard that "a warm contest" was expected, he thought it his duty "by an early declaration to endeavour to preserve

the integrity and peace of so great, so respectable, so unblemished a borough"

If the date given in the *Short Notes* be correct it was on December 25, 1766, and, therefore, during his sojourn in Paris, that Walpole embarked upon his one and only attempt at blank verse and at tragedy, *The Mysterious Mother*. The idea attracted but could not hold him—it was worked out intermittently, with long pauses, and not brought to a conclusion till March 1768. In the interim he had written much prose, both political and archæological. Early in 1767 a French fabrication entitled *Le Testament Politique du Chevalier Robert Walpoole* had seemed to him sufficiently dangerous to require a rejoinder, but as no English translation appeared, his repudiation was published only among his posthumous *Works*.

On the eve of his withdrawal from the parliamentary arena the member for Lynn could not resist the temptation to thrust a finger into the political pie once more. This was when he busied himself in patching up a truce between Conway, then sulking in his tent, and the Rockingham party, notably the Duke of Grafton. His intervention was successful—one hazards the guess that the incomparable Conway had not really desired to lay down his arms at all—yet he must have been glad to find himself back in Paris in September, sitting again by Madame du Deffand's *tonneau* chair, with her dog, Tulipe, on his knee, and bandying epigrams with her and Madame de Choiseul. During his absence there appeared in the *Public Advertiser* two letters of his "on political abuse in newspapers" signed respectively *Toby* and *A Constant Correspondent*. When this, the briefest of his Paris sojourns, was over,

and he found himself once more under the gilded fan-tracery of Strawberry Hill, Walpole settled down to his new task—nothing less than the rehabilitation of that bogey-man among monarchs, Richard III. Of his own works at this date he wrote to the ever-censorious Gray, “the greater part are mere compilations, and no wonder they are, as you say, incorrect, when they are commonly written with people in the room, as *Richard* and the *Noble Authors* were” *The Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third* must rank, however, as something more than a “mere compilation.” It was received with such excitement that the first edition of twelve hundred copies was exhausted in one day, and Selwyn wrote to Lord Carlisle that “Horry seemed mightily pleased with the success his new book had met with.” The gentle art of being tedious was one which “Horry” never practised, whatever his theme. *Historic Doubts* may be only an ingenious piece of special pleading, less amply and less convincingly documented than Sir Clement Markham’s *apologia* of 1907, but it is readable even now, and the Preface shows that the “historic doubter”, as Selwyn called him, had grasped the two fundamental points in Richard’s favour, *ie* the fact that few of his alleged crimes would have profited him anything, and the fact that the bulk of our information about this, the last of the Plantagenets, has been transmitted to us by the hirelings of the first of the Tudors. When, in due course, the professional critics and historians, including David Hume and Milles, Dean of Exeter, girt up their loins and fell upon the book, Walpole began to wish that he had left poor Richard’s memory undefended. In 1769 he was

fain to draw up a reply to certain criticisms, notably to those of Hume incorporated in an article by one Diverdun which had appeared in *Mémoires littéraires de la Grande-Bretagne*, a year later he found himself in conflict with Dr Milles, who had made "certain observations" in the organ of the Society of Antiquaries, and finally, in 1772, hearing that the Society "intended printing some more foolish notes" upon a subject of which he had grown heartily weary, he decided to put himself beyond the reach of *Messieurs les assassins* by resigning his membership

It was within a few days of the original publication of the *Historic Doubts* that Walpole received the portrait of Madame du Deffand which afterwards hung in the breakfast-room at "Strawberry". "*Vous êtes ici en personne*", he wrote to her, "*je vous parle, il ne manque que votre impatience à répondre*". In the following month, March 1768, he finished *The Mysterious Mother*, concerning which he had dropped to his "dear old blind woman" hints that she found unfathomable Montagu, to whom he had been more explicit, "would not bear the subject", and neither Chute's approval nor Gray's blinded Walpole to the fact that the play was fundamentally unsuited for representation on the stage. It is, indeed, a little curious that his imagination—though in the *Castle of Otranto* it had toyed with the theme of incest—should have been allured by a story so sombre and so revolting. He himself knew it, and he wrote to Mason that he believed he had been pleased with what ought to have prevented his "attempting the subject, which was the singularity of it". This "singularity" proved highly disconcerting to his more squeamish admirers, when he had

printed and privately circulated the work. Fanny Burney had "long desired to read it, from so well knowing and so much liking the author", but in 1786, when it fell into her hands, her horror was extreme. She "felt a sort of indignant aversion rise fast and warm" in her mind "against the wilful author of a story so horrible", the "lecture" almost made her regard Mr Walpole "as the patron of the vices he had been pleased to record" and it took her some time to recover her equanimity. Without falling into Fanny's error, and confounding the creator with his creatures—always bad criticism as well as bad theology—we may permit ourselves to regret that Walpole's unsuspected talent for blank verse and for tragic drama did not find some other outlet. In a postscript to an edition which he authorised James Dodsley to publish in 1781 he himself says that he considered the subject "so truly tragic in the two essential springs of terror and pity" that he "could not resist the impulse of adapting it to the scene". If he had left us in any doubt as to his "sources", it might appear that he had anticipated some of Charles Lamb's wanderings into Elizabethan by-paths, and that *The Mysterious Mother* was the spiritual descendant of *The Maide's Tragedy* or '*Tis Pity She's a Whore*'. We know, however, that he had heard, "when very young", of "a gentlewoman under uncommon agonies of mind" who had sought ghostly counsel of Archbishop Tillotson, her story was, in effect, that of *The Mysterious Mother*.

The heroine, and the dominating figure, of the tragedy is the widowed Countess of Narbonne, whose alms and austerities are both so excessive as to lead her chaplain, Father Benedict, to suspect that her soul

is burdened with a more than common load of remorse. She has been a widow for sixteen years, and her only son Edmund, Count of Narbonne, had been exiled for as long, and charged by her never to return while she lives. For her implacable wrath against him she will give only one reason, the fact that on the very night when his father was brought home dead from a hunting accident the young man kept a secret tryst in the castle with a certain Beatrice, then the object of his youthful love. Edmund, at the beginning of the play, has returned in disguise to Narbonne, accompanied by a light-hearted friend called Florian, and is lodged "hard by St. Bridget's nunnery." In a chance encounter with the gloomy Countess Florian makes an impression so favourable that when he, thinking to plead his friend's cause, craves further speech with her, she agrees to meet him at St. Bridget's. In that nunnery dwells a young *protégée* of hers, the sixteen-year-old Adelizia, whose destiny is to the Countess a source of strangely poignant perplexity. The girl now confesses, in answer to some questions from her protectress, that she has "convers'd with a young knight", and that he has "talk'd of love." The knight is Edmund, but the Countess believes him to be Florian, and determines to sanction—and even to expedite—the marriage. Meanwhile Edmund has informed Benedict that the Count—that is, himself—is dead, and that he saw him die. When, however, the priest introduces him into his mother's presence as a witness of her son's death, she swoons. As she recovers consciousness, Edmund impetuously declares himself. The declaration serves only to heighten the mysterious anguish of the Countess,

which veiges upon frenzy With an effort she masters herself The marriage of Adelizia must be celebrated without delay Benedict, thinking to obey her behest, joins the hands of Edmund and Adelizia, who, emerging from the chapel, beseech the blessing of the Countess upon "her childien" Then the terrible truth blazes out, like a sudden, blinding flash of purple lightning Ere she stabs herself with her son's dagger the Countess has revealed to him that it was not—as he had believed—the wanton Beatrice who had kept the midnight tryst with him sixteen years before, and that he and Adelizia are kin in a double and unspeakable kinship of blood Before this climax is reached, Adelizia has been borne off fainting, and we are left to imagine that to her the horror remained unrevealed The ill-starred Edmund rushes away to seek death on the field of battle, but first he charges the faithful Florian to bear his bride

to the holy sisters,
Say 'twas my mother's will she take the veil

The gruesomeness of this plot is regrettable, for it obscures the very real excellences of the play These excellences are recognised by Professor Allardyce Nicholl, when he says that "the blank verse shows Walpole's power over a lower kind of poetry, and the last scenes have a nervous intensity which marks him out as something of a true dramatist" and that "judged by the highest standards, of course, the play is ridiculous and weak, but tested by the drama of its time, it is by way of being a masterpiece" Indeed, if the action, the dialogue, and the texture of the verse be balanced against those of Jephson's *Braganza* or Mason's *Elfrida*, Walpole's virtuosity—to call it nothing higher

—will appear remarkable In their calmer moments his characters exhibit a tendency to verbosity, but when the crisis comes, the words of the Countess clang with half-remembered cadences that are almost authentic Elizabethan

Globe of the world,
If thy frame split not with such crimes as these
It is immortal!

A faint and fugitive element of comedy is introduced in the person of Florian, whose remarks at his first entrance, though the blank verse is not particularly successful, have a touch of the bluff wit of the Bastard in *King John*

What precious mummery! Her son in exile,
She wastes on monks and beggars his inheritance,
For his soul's health! I never knew a woman
But loved our bodies or our souls too well
Each master-whim maintains its hour of empire,
And obstinately faithful to its dictates,
With equal ardour, equal importunity,
They tease us to be damn'd or to be sav'd

Here the excess of weak terminations and redundant syllables has a curious dragging effect upon the rhythm, but that same excess proves that Walpole had now escaped from the thralldom of Augustan prosody, with its meticulously measured stresses and its careful elisions at every second word More characteristic in concept, and more felicitous in form, is the reply of a brother-priest to Benedict's misgivings about the spread of heresy and the cult of "reason"

• each chieftain that attacks us
Must grow the pope of his own heresy
E'en stern philosophy, if once triumphant,
Shall frame some jargon and exact obedience
To metaphysic nonsense worse than ours

The church is but a specious name for empire,
And will exist wherever fools have fears
Rome is no city, 'tis the human heart,
And there suffice it if we plant our banners

Hardly had Walpole put the finishing touches to his tragedy than he found himself involved in a paper argument with Voltaire. The Wicked Wasp of Ferney had asked for a copy of *Historic Doubts* and had received, into the bargain, one of *Otranto*, together with a letter which, though it described him as "the first genius in Europe", also drew his attention to the fact that the writer had taken the liberty "to find fault in print" with his criticisms of "our Shakespeare". "He did not like it", the *Short Notes* record. Walpole prudently dropped the correspondence, only to find a year later that Voltaire had revived the subject of their controversy in the *Mercure de France*, and, what was worse, had written to the Duchesse de Choiseul accusing him of "officiously" sending his works, and of "declaring war" in defence of "*ce buffon Shakespeare*".

Walpole's usual summer jaunt took him this year (1768) to Warwickshire, Yoikshire, and Derbyshire. About this time the equivocal position of his niece, the widowed Maria Waldegrave, disquieted him a little. Not until 1772 was the well-kept secret divulged to him and to the world that she had been lawfully married in 1766 to the prince—William Henry, Duke of Gloucester—with whom her close association had been a source of so much uncharitable surmise.

In the month of March 1769 Mr Bathoe the bookseller, handed to his distinguished patron, Mr Walpole, a packet addressed to him from Bristol

It contained "a very curious and kind letter", together with some even more curious documents. Walpole responded with eager precipitancy. The vision of an untapped horde of ancient manuscripts, thus dangled before his eyes, excited him so much that he had hardly enough presence of mind left to ask leave to inquire "where Rowley's poems are to be found?" For his unknown correspondent was Thomas Chatterton.

Admirers of the "Wonderful Boy" have been exceeding wroth with Walpole for the part which they believe him to have played in the tragedy of that thwarted spirit. Yet they over-reach themselves. The allegation of the editor of Chatterton's *Miscellanies* in 1778 (which drew forth a public *démenti* from Walpole) that the youth had "met with a very cold reception" was grotesquely untrue. The "reception" was, as the event proved, only too encouraging. Even the preposterous history of "Peynctynge" was hailed with joy at Strawberry Hill, and not until the superior knowledge and acumen of Gray and Mason had detected the imposition did Walpole change his tune. He took the trouble to inform himself, through "a relation at Bath", of Chatterton's actual circumstances, and, in the same letter in which he confessed that better judges than he "were by no means satisfied with the authenticity" of his "supposed MSS", he urged him "in duty and gratitude to his mother" to labour industriously in his profession (of attorney's clerk), adding that "when he should have made a fortune he might unbend himself in the studies consonant to his inclinations". Though this excellent advice must have sounded in Chatterton's ears much

as the *Quarterly's* counsel to "stick to his gallipots" sounded in the ears of John Keats, it was surely unwise of the "Wonderful Boy" to adopt a hectoring and defiant tone, to reiterate that the Rowley MSS were "an authentic piece of antiquity", and to write to Walpole as if he, Chatterton, and not his intended dupe, were the party aggrieved. The height and front of Walpole's offending seems to have been that he made Chatterton wait some weeks before he sent his forgeries back to Bristol. The episode occurred on the eve of his departure for a six weeks' sojourn in France, and he did not take the trouble to deal with the matter until his return. Then he dispatched the documents without comment, repressing but—characteristically—preserving the draft of a covering letter couched in decidedly energetic terms. It cannot be doubted that when he heard of Chatterton's suicide Walpole was genuinely shocked. The intelligence was imparted to him at a Royal Academy banquet by Goldsmith, whose loudly-proclaimed belief in the authenticity of the Rowley MSS had been received with laughter by Dr. Johnson, who was of the company. When, in 1778, the controversy was revived, he was at great pains to defend himself, and his defence is neither unconvincing nor insincere.

The Parisian visit of 1769 was almost uniformly delightful. Of Madame du Deffand Walpole then wrote to Montagu

she makes songs, sings them, remembers all that ever were made, and having lived from the most agreeable to the most reasoning age, has all that was amiable in the last, all that is sensible in this, without the vanity of the former or the pedant impertinence of the latter

In April of this year Kitty Clive had quitted the stage for good. That Walpole should ever have imagined his rubicund old friend in the rôle of the Countess of Narbonne is distinctly curious, and that he should have written a flippant epilogue for her in that character is stranger still. On the other hand, it was obvious that she would turn to him for a set of valedictory verses, and he wrote them with grace and skill, though the analogy between the evanishment of Kitty to "private shades" and the withdrawal of Charles V into the cloister seems somewhat far-fetched. Still, it struck a topical note. Robertson's *Life* of the heavy-chinned Habsburg was the literary sensation of the hour.

The year that followed was singularly uneventful. Beyond continuing his *Memoirs* and tinkering with the fourth volume of "my *Painters*", Walpole seems to have written little. Masquerades and the later scenes of the *Wilkes and Liberty* farce monopolised the world's attention—and his. The chief incident of the summer was a visit to Earl and Countess Temple at Stowe, where the guest of honour was the stalwart Princess Emily, and where an attempt at a *fête champêtre* was frustrated by the coolness of the weather, the meagreness of the illuminations, and the inadequacy of the music, supplied by "an ancient militia-man" with "a squeaking tabor and pipe." Walpole "could not help laughing" as he surveyed his fellow-revellers, who, "instead of tripping lightly to such an Arcadian entertainment, were hobbling down the balustrades, wrapped up in cloaks and great-coats for fear of catching cold." But he did not fail to "drop into poetry" of a highly Arcadian and pastoral complexion in honour of the princess.

As the year waned, the gout waxed "I fancy", writes the poor victim to Lady Ossoly in September, "I look very like the mummy of some sacred crane which Egyptian piety bundled up in cired cloths and called preserving" With the return of summer, his thoughts veered towards Paris For Madame du Deffand's sake—he stresses the motive in a letter to Lord Strafford—he will "leave groves and lawns and rivers for a dirty town, with a dirtier ditch calling itself the Seine". It was in Paris, in August 1771, that the news reached him of Gray's death "I wish to God you may be able to tell me it is not true!" he wrote to Cole, and he concludes, rather touchingly, "Me-thinks, as we grow old, our only business here is to adorn the graves of our friends or to dig our own" To Mason he wrote in the same strain on his return, enclosing some lines on the dead poet which "suppose him buried among his real predecessors" and conclude, with more enthusiasm than lucidity.

Aloft let pomp her Edwards, Henrys, keep,
Near Homer's dust should Pindar's ashes sleep

The death of Gray—who left all his papers to Mason—served to cement the alliance between his two surviving friends During the three years which the legatee devoted to the compilation of the poet's *Life and Letters*, Walpole helped him constantly with information and advice, never once allowing his personal feelings to get the better of his loyalty to the memory of Gray and West "I had rather," he wrote in 1773, "be mortified than subtract a little from the honour your pen is conferring on my two dead friends It would be base to rob their graves to save my own

vanity " The friendship between him and Mason was interrupted in 1784, when—perhaps not without reason—he suspected "Scroddles" of tummying his Whig principles with an eye to a bishopric. A somewhat tepid reconciliation took place in 1796, when neither of the two quondam cronies had a year to live.

The preference exhibited by Walpole in his old age for the society of ladies had its corollary in his life-long preference for little girls over little boys. He was always a courteous knight to virgins of five, and for the delectation of one of them, Lady Anne Fitzpatrick, he wrote in 1771 the fable of the *Peach in Brandy*. This fable formed one of a series of five *Hieroglyphic Tales*, with which he had amused himself at intervals between 1770 and 1772, and which, according to the Preface, "were undoubtedly written a little before the creation of the world, and have ever since been preserved by oral tradition in the mountains of Crampcraggiri, an uninhabited island, not yet discovered." The whimsicality of these tales is such that the intended parable or satire sometimes becomes a little difficult of detection. The design has the inconsequence, the quaintness, the gaiety of colour and the lack of perspective, of a scene painted on a piece of Chinese porcelain. Perhaps the best is the story of *Mi Li*, with its delicate undercurrent of irony, and its deft introduction of real scenes—the grotto and bridge at Park Place—and living characters—Lady Ailesbury's niece, Caroline Campbell, and her spaniels with their "ruby eyes".

Like the verses appointing the Countess Temple Oberon's Laureate, those *To Lady*—,¹ *when about*

¹ Lady Anne Fitzpatrick

Five Years Old, with a Present of Shells, written in 1772, inspire regret that Walpole wrote so few in this kind. The tints are as luminous as those of the shells themselves; the cadence is that of the Restoration lyricists. It is as if—fantastic thought!—Sedley or Rochester were gambolling upon a nuisery-floor

O nymph, compar'd with whose young bloom
 Hebe's herself an ancient fright,
 May these gay shells find grace and room
 Both in your baby-house and sight!
 Shells! What are shells? you ask, admiring,
 With stare half pleasure, half surprise,
 And, sly with nature's art, enquiring
 At dear Mamma's all-speaking eyes
 Shells, fairest Anne, are playthings made
 By a brave god call'd Father Ocean,
 Whose frown, from pole to pole obey'd,
 Commands the waves and stills their motion
 From that old sire a daughter came
 As like Mamma as blue to blue,
 And, like Mamma, the sea-born dame,
 An urchin bore, not unlike you
 For him fond Grandpapa compels
 The floods to furnish such a state
 Of corals and of cockle-shells
 Would turn a little lady's pate
 The chit has tons of baubles more,
 His nurs'ry's stuff'd with doves and sparrows,
 And littered is its azure floor
 With painted quivers, bows and arrows
 Spread, spread your frock, you must be friends,
 His toys shall fill your lap and breast,
 To-day the boy this sample sends,
 And some years hence he'll send the rest

Faerie and farce certainly usurped Walpole's mind during the year 1773, fusing and crystallising in his "Moral Entertainment", *Nature Will Prevail*. Of this flimsy trifle Mr Austin Dobson has said that it "has something of the character of such earlier productions of Mr W S Gilbert as the *Palace of Truth*"

It has also something of *Iolanthe*, and a fugitive touch of *The Tempest*. The scene is laid on a "Desart Isle", and of the four *dramatis personae*, two are mortal men, one is a mortal maiden, and one the fairy of the island. In order to cure Current of his loquacity and Padlock of his suspicious reserve, Almadine has caused them to be wrecked on the shores of her domain, whither she has likewise transplanted the country damsel, Finette. Current's struggles with his inclination to disobey her behest that he shall not tell Padlock of her existence, the intervention of an echo, his loss of hearing as the penalty of his disobedience, the wooing of Finette and the discomfiture of Padlock, all make excellent fooling. The dialogue is light to the point of frothiness, but not uniformly artificial, and its delicate vein of "riskiness" probably pleased the public when, in 1778, it was "acted at the little theatre in the Haymarket with success".

To his dear Lady Ossory Walpole wrote in June 1774, "You yourself owned, Madam, that I am grown quite lifeless. I am none of your Glastonbury thorns that blow at Christmas", yet this attenuated tree in that same year put forth at least two buds. The parody of Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son, in the form of three letters from a woman of fashion to her daughter, has the essential quality of a good parody—it distorts its model without thereby rendering it unrecognisable.

"It is a charming thing," says Mamma, "to make visits and verses, and I hope you will have a talent for both. It is harder to make verses than visits, but the more difficult a thing is, the better, consequently, if you could do anything that is impossible, it would be still more glorious."

As for the other "bud", the verses to the three Vernons, it is mere *clinquant*, but it is facile and felicitous, and

betrays no decline of invention. This and the preceding year had been full of distresses for the versemonger. Early in 1773 his nephew, Lord Orford, became insane, and a sudden burden of unfamiliar and bewildering responsibilities was thereby laid upon his meagre shoulders. An unsuspected vein of practical good sense revealed itself in Walpole at this juncture, and his adaptability must have been surprising to himself and his friends. He, whose earlier trafficking had been all with *bibelots*, and whose knowledge of animals was confined to pet dogs of diminutive proportions, now had to supervise the sale of his unhappy nephew's stud, and to "give orders about game, dispark Houghton, have plans of farming, vend colts, fillies, bullocks, and sheep." He tells Mann with pride that he "has not yet confounded terms, nor ordered pointers to be turned to grass." In the midst of these arduous activities he had little leisure to spin verse. The lines written in 1773 to Walter Clark, Lord Nuneham's gardener, suggest an instinctive attempt to escape from bucolic realities into a walled and formal garden, as when he declares that

The lilies of the field that shone
With brighter blaze than Solomon
Shall beg to quit their rural stations
And mix with Walter Clark's carnations

Well might poor Walpole lament that all his amusements were at an end! Yet it was not so. In 1773-1774, at the height of his distresses, he found—or made—time to annotate six rather ponderous satires of Mason, and to spin a web of mystification round the fact that he had done so. The secret of the authorship of the first three—two were anonymous, and one publishec

as "by Malcolm M'Griggor Esq of Knightsbridge"—was well kept, and gave rise to much speculation Walpole, anxious lest the revelation of his share might cause embarrassment to his niece, the Duchess of Gloucester, half-regretted that Mason had shown him some of his manuscripts before publication "I never could tell a lie without colouring," he remarks ruefully His notes are racy and piquant, but at this distance Sir William Chambers, architect of the Kew pagoda, Pinchbeck, son of the inventor of the alloy which still bears his name, Fletcher Norton, lawyer and rascal, and Shebbeare, Jacobite turncoat, look hardly larger than a group of marionettes, and not much more life-like To forge his miniature bolts probably gave Walpole a little badly-needed distraction during the weary months when the partial recovery of his nephew seemed almost as great a calamity as his continued insanity The satires are spread over a period of six years—1773–1779—and synchronise almost exactly with the illness of Lord Orford The luckless young lord recovered his sanity in 1774, only to relapse in 1777, but his second attack, though it imposed certain distressful duties on his uncle, did not mean a renewal of the servitude of 1773–1774

"I now declared", writes Walpole to Mann, "I would take on me the care of his person and his health, but never of his fortune . My own peace, at the end of my life, and broken as I am, must weigh something "

A year later Lord Orford recovered again, and the list of his many acts of ingratitude to a most exemplary uncle was his death in 1791, by which Horace Walpole found himself the disconcerted inheritor of an un-

wanted earldom and a debt-encumbered estate. During an interval of alleged sanity in 1779, the wretched young man had almost broken that uncle's heart by selling to Catherine the Great the entire collection of pictures at Houghton. Thus were dispersed the *Ædes Walpoleanæ* of Horace's youthful pride.

Such intervals of release as the course of his nephew's illness allowed him were spent by Walpole in the somewhat half-hearted pursuit of his old hobbies. As the American war developed, his bias in favour of the insurgent Colonials revealed itself more and more clearly. "Our conduct", he wrote, in 1774, "has been that of pert children, we have thrown a pebble at a mastiff, and are surprised it was not frightened." There is a note of profound lassitude in his remark to Lady Ossory a year later, "when one has lived a good while, events strike one less." Even so, the vision of Marie Antoinette, "dressed in silver, scattered over with *laurier-roses*", roused him to almost lyric enthusiasm during his last sojourn in Paris, in the summer of 1775. From this journey he returned, as George Selwyn told Lord Carlisle, "as peevish as a monkey." He was, indeed, at the turn of the road. There remained before him more than two decades of life, but it was a life that grew ever less eventful, narrowing at last to the boundaries of Twickenham and the compass of a card-table or a tea-tray. The epilogue to Robert Jephson's bombastic tragedy of *Braganza*, written in 1775, is the last thing of its kind recorded in the *Short Notes*, and one of the least worth recording. Henceforth the painted windows of Strawberry Hill darken with the slow setting of the sun.

CHAPTER X

LAST YEARS—HORACE WALPOLE AND HIS CRITICS

WHEN Horace Walpole was born, in 1717, the first Hanoverian King had sat only three years on the English throne, Marlborough, Bolingbroke, and Isaac Newton still lived, Pope's *Iliad* was in course of publication, and full-bottomed wigs were worn, when, in 1797, he died, George III had reigned for thirty-seven years, Wellington held a Colonelcy in the 33rd Regiment of Foot, Melbourne was an Undergraduate, Wordsworth had solemnly dedicated himself to the poetic vocation, and gentlemen had begun, not only to "wear their own hair", but to crop it *en Brutus*.

So violent and so profound were the social and political changes that marked his last two decades, Walpole took refuge, as in a fortress, within the embattled walls of "Strawberry", and felt himself beleaguered there by uncouth people, and ideas even more uncouth. As the troubled years passed, his emergencies became less and less frequent. In the summer of 1780 the Gordon Riots had perturbed him to the bones, though he rallied sufficiently to write to Lady Ossory that he was "decking himself with blue ribbons like a May-day garland", and that he regretted he had not brought the armour of Francis I from Twickenham.

to London. After 1789 he could not bear to look at the livid crimson glare over France unless through his traceried windows—and even then he made haste to avert his eyes

“My dear Sir,” he wrote to Mann, in 1784, “life is like a chess-board, the white spaces and the black are close together, it does not signify of what colour the last square is, the border closes all”

When those words were written, and for some time afterwards, it seemed as if he had made his own last move on to a square of the darker colour. Death was thinning the ranks of his friends with steady, relentless strokes of the scythe. Chute, his neighbour, “the genius that presided over poor ‘Strawberry’”, had died in 1776, in 1780 the estranged Montagu departed, and Madame du Deffand followed, Cole succumbed to the Fenland fogs in 1782, brother Ned gave up the ghost in 1784, and a year later the rubicund countenance of the Clive shone at Little Strawberry no more. The death of Mann in 1786 left almost as great a blank as if he had been one of the Twit’nam circle, and Selwyn’s lugubrious figure vanished from the scene in 1791. True, the incomparable Conway survived till 1795, but he loved the seclusion of Park Place so well that it was left for his sculptress daughter, the widowed Mrs Damer, to form a connecting link between the cousins. It was in the year of “Miny’s” demise that Dr. Burney and Fanny visited the Gothic castle, and recorded how

Strawberry Hill . . . with all its chequered and interesting varieties of detail, had a something in its whole of monotony, that cast, insensibly, over its visitors an undefinable species

of secret constraint, and made cheerfulness rather the effect of effort than the spring of pleasure

Added to this growing sense of isolation there was for Walpole the increasing burden of ill-health Robert Jephson, to whom, between 1774 and 1776, he had addressed six admirably lucid and "Horatian" papers, *Thoughts on Tragedy* and *Thoughts on Comedy*, produced in 1781 *The Count of Narbonne*, a dramatised adaptation of *The Castle of Otranto* Selwyn then noted that "Mr Walpole", who attended the first performance, was "more *défait*, more *perclus de ses membres*, than I ever yet saw any poor wretch" Walpole's spirits flagged sometimes, but never his sense of humour And his quill, faithful in the service of his favourite correspondents even when it was driven with difficulty by a lame and muffled hand, lost nothing of its liveliness The epitaph which he devised in 1783 for Lady Ossory's bullfinch drew a grave remonstrance from Mason, who found it fantastic to the verge of impiety A year later he sent,

From a castle as vast—as the castles on signs,

six gay and gallant couplets to the Dowager Lady Lyttleton The *Officina Arbuteana* was still functioning, though rather languidly, and it is worthy of note that the majority of its later productions were written by, to, or about ladies Kirgate printed in 1785 six copies of the *Hieroglyphic Tales* and four hundred of Walpole's essay *On Modern Gardening* (written in 1770), interleaved with a French translation by the Duc de Nivernois. Though the essayist protests that it is not his business to lay down rules for gardens, but to give the history of them, the work amounts to a

defence of what might be called the "romantic" school of gardening, as opposed to that which delighted in "parterres embroidered like a petticoat" and "a tiresome uniformity".

It was a year later—in the summer of 1786—that Princess Emily demanded from him "some verses on Gunnersbury", and received in return three stanzas comparing her to the Emperor Augustus and the writer to "Flaccus". The third declares

As warm as his my zeal for you,
Great Princess, could I show it,
But though you have a Horace too,
Ah! Madam, he's no poet!

Most assuredly he was none

More and more, as the shadows lengthened, did Walpole seek solace in feminine society, lacking which his last years would have been desolate indeed. Pinkerton, the pushful Scottish antiquary, who thrust his sallow and diminutive person upon Walpole's notice in 1784, has recorded how in that society "he would exceed his usual powers in conversation, his spirits were animated, as if by a cordial, and he would scatter his wit and *petits mots* with dazzling profusion" ("Polite, ingenious, entertaining and original", Miss Burney wrote of him in 1790). But it was something more engaging than a love for tea-table amenities which prompted him to spend so many hours with Mrs. Vesey, when that poor lady's company was cheerful neither to herself nor to others, and with Mrs. Delany, when that venerable dame was in her less jocund moods. We catch pleasant glimpses of him in the correspondence of Hannah More (who dedicated to him her didactic *Florio*, and whose "very

pretty, novel poem, *Bonner's Ghost*", was printed at the Officina Arbuteana), Fanny Burney, and Mary Hamilton, and there we see him delighting old ladies with his courtly *prévenances* and young ones with his gallant railery. The half-sprightly, half-sanctimonious Hannah and the warm-hearted Mary contend playfully for his smiles. In her journal for 1785 Mary notes

At $\frac{1}{2}$ past 10 Mr W brought me home. Poor Miss More, she certainly will not sleep to-night, before we parted she looked as yellow as saffron. Do you not think Mr Walpole is a happy man to have *two* such *paragons* of perfection in love with him?'

Three years later there swam into his ken two other "paragons of perfection"—or such he accounted them—who were to be the "sweet consolation" of his last days. These were the Berry sisters, Mary and Agnes, "the two pearls that I found in my path", as he wrote to Lady Ossory after their first encounter at the house of Mann's niece, Lady Herries. He was, perhaps, guilty of a certain degree of ingratitude to his older friends when he declared that he had been "three-score and ten years looking for a society" that he "perfectly liked", but he spoke truly when he said, "I soon found that the charming Berrys were precisely *ce qu'il me fallait*". His affection for them was as impetuous in its onset as it was unchangeable in its quality. Before long, he fretted and pined when he was deprived of the company of the dark-eyed, somewhat *précieuse* Mary, and the gentler, less regularly beautiful Agnes. Their project of spending the year 1790-1791 on the Continent, in the midst of the revolutionary tumults, appalled him. When Mary re-

lently put it into execution, and they left England with their unobtrusive and obedient widowed father, his distress was pitiful, and his voluminous letters to them have a cadence that resembles the clucking of a distracted hen. No doubt it was very good for Horace Walpole's soul to be thus vigorously shaken out of his egotism in his old age, but the shaking process must sometimes have been decidedly painful. When, at last, all three returned, nothing would satisfy him but that they should take up their abode in Kitty Clive's old cottage—and there the sisters remained until in 1852, within a few months of each other, they died. This friendship which, in the words of Mr. J. C. Squire, "gave to his last years at Strawberry Hill the aspect of an Indian summer", invested life with a new interest even when "the Berrys" were absent, visiting their grandmother in the north, or taking the waters at Cheltenham, or bathing on the coast of Kent. Then he had no other occupation that he "liked a quarter so well" as chatting to them on paper. They found his old stories entertaining therefore for their delectation he jotted down, in 1788, a desultory, conversational, but remarkably pithy and clear-cut sequence of *Reminiscences*. His narrative, he warns them, "will probably resemble siege-pieces, which are struck of promiscuous metals." Though, in effect, the metal he uses is neither pure nor heavy, the impression could not well be more distinct. It belies the Voltairean motto with which he prefixed the manuscript, "*il ne faut point d'esprit pour s'occuper des vieux événemens*".

With one exception Walpole's friends and kinsfolk extended a generous welcome to his "dear Both". That exception was his niece, the Duchess of Glou-

cester, who, goaded thereto by newspaper innuendoes, asked bluntly whether it was her uncle's intention to marry Miss Berry "That", replied Walpole, "is as Miss Berry pleases" Did he ever propose to her "in form"? Pinkerton states that "he offered his hand successively to two most amiable and interesting sisters", and he is corroborated by their personal maid, who lived into the 'nineties of the nineteenth century. In her old age Mary was pointed out to Lady Dorothy Nevill (*née* Walpole) as the lady who had refused to marry her kinsman Horace and there seems to have been a general consensus of opinion that the elder was the favourite sister But Mary—to use the gipsy sibyl's phrase—had been "crossed in love" Her betrothed, the irascible General O'Hara, broke off their engagement on account of her refusal to marry him and leave England in Walpole's lifetime, and they never met again Many years later the news of his death, too abruptly communicated, caused her to faint away It is probably true that she could have been Countess of Oxford had she so willed Her old admirer was not a little in awe of her, and had she objected to the exaggerated and almost maudlin phraseology of some of his letters to his "dear Wives", his "ribs", his "Amours", it is beyond doubt that he would have abandoned that tone Apparently she neither objected nor desired that in her own case this language should cease to be metaphorical

At this distance it is almost impossible for us to see Mary Berry as she was seen in her youth by Horace Walpole Most of the existing descriptions of her were written long after his death, when she had developed into a deep-voiced, corpulent, matronly gentle-

woman, one in whose company such men as Macaulay, Monckton Milnes, and Thackeray found some—to us—incomprehensible charm. The image of Agnes, though indistinct, is much more engaging. Thackeray's daughter, Lady Ritchie, remembered her as "a little grey lady, a tiny woman, daintily dressed in grey", who had a "gentle, confident glance, and a certain expression of rich composure". And Agnes, though less of a bluestocking than Mary, was not without gifts. Did she not "copy admirably" Lady Di Beauclerk's gipsies, "though for the first time of her attempting colours"?

Mr Berry, that "little merry man with a round face", was designated by Walpole his literary executor, but it was well understood that the duty of selecting and arranging the manuscripts and other materials for ultimate publication should be performed by his elder daughter. With such energy did she pursue her task, the five-volume folio edition of the *Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford*, appeared in the year following his death, to wit, in 1798. Miss Berry, as an editor, showed both tact and skill. And she possessed courage, too. For when Macaulay, in the famous review, "dusted the jacket" of her old friend and benefactor, she came forward in defence of Walpole, not, perhaps, very conclusively, but with a touch of generous sentiment. It would have been strange, indeed, if the queer, wistful, intense affection that she inspired had left her wholly unresponsive. Yet M. Paul Yvon describes in her the avenger of all Madame du Deffand's wrongs!

As the end of Walpole's life approaches, the years tend more and more to merge into each other. His

intellect remained as alert and his humour as quaintly whimsical as of old, and the letters of these sunset days have as much charm of form and colour as any he ever wrote. But he had lost certain illusions, personal and political, that once he had held dear. The French Revolution brought his Whiggery, still intact when his *Last Journals* ended in September 1783, tumbling in fragments round his ears. And concerning his own works he now wrote with sincerity what he had formerly written with affectation. To the royal bookseller, George Nicol, who in 1792 desisted to publish an *édition de luxe* of his works, he declared, "I would no more hear of a splendid and ornamental edition of my trifling writings than I would dress my old, emaciated, infirm person in rich and gaudy clothes." It may be that he had spoken truly when he told Madame du Deffand, "*Je suis bien petit à mes propres yeux*." Not even to please Mrs. Elizabeth Carter would he dress his "old, emaciated infirm person" in scarlet and ermine, though when he succeeded to the Earldom of Orford in 1791 she had hoped that he would immediately "get an Act of Parliament to put down faro". It seems sometimes as if he were more than a little out of love with life. "My being", he wrote to Mann in 1776, "is so *isolé* and insignificant, that I shall go out like a lamp in an illumination that cannot be missed." And this mood recurs at intervals until the end. His dictum, that "the world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel", had a double application to himself, for he had both thought and felt much, and thoughts yielded the first place to feelings as the years passed.

The rumour, repeated to Hannah More by Dr.

Warton in 1788, that he was writing *Walpoliana* drew from him a comically vehement protest

No, in truth, nor anything else, nor shall—nor will I go out in a jest-book Age has not only made me prudent but, luckily, lazy, and without that latter extinguisher I do not know but that farthing candle, my discretion, would let my snuff of life flit to the last sparkle of folly, like what children call the parson and clerk in a burnt bit of paper

His “snuff of life” flickered into some very gay little sparks before it fell into a film of grey ash The gift of a bunch of knotted silks, the Peruvian Quipos alphabet, from Lady Ossory in 1781, fired a whole train of such sparks in his mind He is baffled by the Quipos, and “would as soon be able to hold a dialogue with a rainbow, by the help of its grammar, a prism”, but another idea soon occurs to him

The Peruvian Quipos adapted a language to the eyes rather than to the ears Why should not there be one for the nose? A rose, a jessamine, a pink, a jonquil and a honeysuckle might signify the vowels The Cape jessamine which has two smells, was born a diphthong How charming it would be to smell an ode from a nosegay, and to scent one’s handkerchief with a favourite song!

This fantastic quality of mind served to lessen the impact of certain strange and disquieting developments in his last years The immensity of the stellar spaces revealed by “Mr Herschel’s giant telescope” daunts him less when he has imagined, as an analogy, himself trying to unfold to a pismire in his garden “an account of the vast Empire of China” A glimpse of Blanchard’s balloon over the tree-tops of Sunbury gives him a prophetic vision of “the change that would be made in the world by the substitution of balloons to

ships", and when there should be "fights in the air with wind-guns" Yet behind these "fooleries", as he calls them, there is a note of dismay One feels that he was not altogether loth to leave an earth already trembling with the first dull vibrations of the Age of Steam

For "Strawberry" his love never waned As late as 1793 he received Joseph Farington and George Dance there, and showed them some of his heterogeneous, heaped-up treasures It was on this occasion that Dance drew the pencil profile of him now in the National Portrait Gallery Farington vouches for the excellence of the likeness, and there is probably more of the quintessential "Horry" in that alert, amused, mundane old mask than in Reynolds' rather pompous, self-conscious presentment of him, or Eckhardt's, wigless and bland, or Rosalba's, with pouting lips, or Hone's, with the oddly distended nose Apart from paintings and drawings there remain two admirable portraits of Walpole, word-portraits of him in middle life, and in old age, the first traced by Mary Lætitia Hawkins, daughter of Dr Johnson's Sir John, and the second by Pinkerton

Writing of "Mr. Walpole" as she remembered him before 1773, Mary Lætitia says:

His figure was not merely tall, but more properly long and slender to excess, his complexion, and particularly his hands, of a most unhealthy paleness His eyes were remarkably bright and penetrating, very dark and lively, his voice was not strong, but his tones were extremely pleasant, and, if I may say so, gentlemanly I do not remember his common gait, he always entered a room in that style of affected delicacy which fashion had then made almost natural, *chapeau bras* between his hands, as if he

wished to compress it, or under his arm, knees bent and feet on tiptoe, as if afraid of a wet floor. His dress in visiting was most usually in summer, when I most saw him, a lavender suit, the waistcoat embroidered with a little silver, or of white silk worked in the tambour, partridge silk stockings and gold buckles, ruffles and frill generally lace. I remember when a child thinking him very much underdressed if at any time except in mourning he wore hemmed cambric. In summer no powder, but his wig combed straight, and showing his very smooth, pale forehead, and queued behind, in winter, powder.

Pinkerton's portrait belongs to a later date, when Walpole was so *perclus de ses membres* that his tyrannical Swiss valet, Philip Columb, had to half-carry him up and down stairs.

The person of Horace Walpole was short¹ and slender, but compact and neatly formed. When viewed from behind, he had somewhat of a boyish appearance, owing to the form of his person, and the simplicity of his dress. His features may be seen in many portraits, but none can express the placid goodness of his eyes, which would often sparkle with sudden rays of wit, or dart forth flashes of the most keen and intuitive intelligence. His laugh was forced and uncouth, and even his smile not the most pleasing.

Later there follow two touches which call to life the small boy of seventy years before who had loved his "cruatuars" so well.

His approach was proclaimed and attended by a favourite little dog, the legacy of the Marquise du Deffand, and which ease and attention had rendered so fat that it could hardly move. This was placed beside him on a small sofa, the tea-kettle, stand and heater were brought in, and he drank two or three cups of that liquor out of most rare and precious ancient porcelain of Japan, of a fine white

¹ Apparently his stature had shrunk by the time Pinkerton made his acquaintance.

embossed with large leaves The loaf and butter were
not spared . and the dog and the squirrels had a
liberal share of his repast

In both these pictures the background is Twickenham. Against no other background has that odd, attenuated figure so engaging a mien.

It is only of recent years that this engaging quality in Horace of "Strawberry" has become visible, and that he has found good friends among the critics of England and France. Between the average reader and any just conception of his personality Macaulay's essay long interposed the image of an exasperated dominie with a bunch of birch-twigs in his fist. The source of this exasperation was partly political and partly temperamental. Macaulay admired earnestness, he extolled consistency, it amused Walpole to pretend to be even more flighty than he actually was. Macaulay found it easier to conceive that a Tory might be saved than that a lukewarm Whig could escape damnation, and of the ardour of Walpole's Whiggery he was never satisfied. With infinite contempt he remarks that "he *called* himself a Whig". What Mr Robert Lynd sees clearly in Walpole, his warmth as a friend, his sincere hatred of tyranny and intolerance, his almost childish craving for the affection of those for whom he really cared, was all hidden from his earlier commentators. Even Barbey d'Aurevilly, who admired his letters wholeheartedly, said of him, with an almost audible shudder, "*il est étincelant et coupant comme un glaçon*". Old Isaac D'Israeli, between whose fantastic young Benjamin and Walpole there was a sort of queer affinity, dealt somewhat harshly with him, and Sir Leslie Stephen, appreciative though he is of the "Gothiciser"

and the *épistolier*, seems slightly intolerant of the man

In extenuation of Macaulay, and of those who endorsed or shared his views, it may be recalled that the revelation of Walpole's rather complicated and elusive *ego* has been progressive and intermittent, and remains incomplete even now. There was once some excuse for the critics who beheld in "Horry" only an affected, malicious little fop, with an inordinate passion for pinnacles and an undeniable knack of writing letters. None of the various editions of the letters published prior to 1903, when the late Mrs. Paget Toynbee's heroic venture was launched, could be called accurate or representative, and all of them grouped together do not cover as much ground as hers. Since her death the task has been carried forward by Dr. Paget Toynbee with an enthusiasm and a fidelity equal to her own. In 1926 he issued the third of three additional volumes, supplementary to the first fifteen. It is in these eighteen volumes that Walpole should be sought by those who wish to enjoy the keenest pleasure that his company can give. Down those broad avenues, and along those winding by-paths, we must pursue that tricky sprite, who will elude us if we grow weary in the pursuit. But weariness is not commonly felt by the pursuers of "Horry."

"My letters", wrote the shameless fellow to Lady Ossory in 1789, "are only fit to be seen by those that have no more rational diversion." No doubt it was this conviction which prompted him to retrieve so many of them, to refashion such as failed to please him, to annotate any that seemed obscure. The ease and impetus of his style, the unflinching freshness and flexi-

bility of his fancy, were surely not the result of conscious and careful art! And yet—and yet—within six weeks of his death he asked Lady Ossory to return to him the last—and not the least delightful—letter he ever wrote Did Kirgate, then, make more than one draft from his dictation before those seemingly artless and spontaneous phrases of farewell fell softly into place?

Self-knowledge is given to few among the sons of men, and to few indeed among the drivers of the quill Yet there must have been moments when Walpole knew himself for what he was, a perfect letter-writer, the triumphant master of one of the most delectable and the most difficult of all the literary arts His cult of Madame de Sévigné, whose pen-case was preserved as a sacred relic of Strawberry Hill, made it inevitable that his style should borrow certain tints and tones from hers But he is no mere imitator "With regard to letter-writing", he once told Lord Strafford, "I am firmly persuaded that it is a province in which women will always shine superiorly for our sex is too jealous of the reputation of good sense to condescend to hazard a thousand trifles and negligences which give grace, ease, and familiarity to correspondence" To write of trifles without being oneself trivial is no common accomplishment, and both Walpole and his beloved "Madonna of the Rocks" possessed it in the highest degree When Macaulay has asked "what is the charm, the irresistible charm, of Walpole's writings?" he says, answering himself, that it "consists in the art of amusing without exciting" This is true, but it is not all the truth Walpole is always amusing—when he wishes to be, to excite is not his rôle "*Avec de l'apprêt*", write two of his recent critics, MM

Legouis and Cazamian, "*il a une simplicité non feinte, qui va même parfois à la négligence du grand seigneur, il n'est jamais ennuyeux ni plat, et déploie un bonheur d'expression souvent original*" Barbey d'Aurevilly who liked him less and did not understand him so well, declared, "*Les lettres de Horace Walpole vivent encore et vivront Le reste de son œuvre est maintenant à tous les diables de l'oubli, les seuls diables qui se tiennent tranquilles.*" And in *The Peace of the Augustans* Professor Saintsbury carries us several steps further towards answering Macaulay's question more effectively than Macaulay himself could—or, at least, did Speaking of the letters, he says

The atmosphere never oppresses, the society never tires or teases You do not violently like or dislike anybody, though any dislike to Horace himself which you may have begun with will probably dwindle You have not been in an Earthly Paradise, there is no Matilda there, and most certainly no Beatrice But you have been "in Society", society sometimes a little unedifying but never very bad, and almost always amusing

It is possible that Walpole, had he cared to make the attempt, might have written an artificial romance of some charm, on the lines of the Augustan comedy of manners He had all the necessary equipment at command Such a proceeding, however, might have smacked too much of the professional man of letters "As for literature", quoth he, "it is very amusing when one has nothing else to do" And one usually *had* something else to do—or one wished the world to think so *Otranto* was in another category altogether That was a pastime, the sequel to a Gothic dream, the *tour de force* of a brilliant amateur, in no wise to be

confounded with such Grub Street wares as *The Vicar of Wakefield* or *Rasselas*

Walpole, indeed, walked through life as he did into Sir John Hawkins' withdrawing-room, "on tip-toe, as if afraid of a wet floor" His fragile physique and his nervous temperament caused him to shirk the contemplation of distressful or perturbing things It would be ungrateful to blame him too severely, for it is precisely this detachment from the squalid and humdrum grind of existence, this concentration upon witty and whimsical, mundane and courtly ideas and images that makes his society so refreshing His daisied meadows, dotted with sheep like toys and ladies like porcelain shepherdesses, offer a happy way of escape from the gloom and turmoil of Johnson's London, or Fielding's, or Hogarth's The trees on his horizon wave gently, the brocaded figures move with ease, their distant voices, borne clearly on the lightly-stirring air, say absurd, or fatuous, or witty things, but never anything that it wearies us to hear And that the spontaneity of the letters cannot be wholly the result of artifice is proved by the fact that portraits of personages such as Newcastle, Chatham, Wilkes, and Rigby are infinitely less vivid in the *Memoirs*, where they were painted with care, than in the correspondence, where they seem to have been sketched in haste

The debt of the student of social history to Walpole is very great, and is too seldom acknowledged The elimination of a mere half-dozen of his canvases, the Norfolk country-house, the Jacobite trials, the funeral of George II, Wesley at Bath, the *bal paré* of Marie Antoinette, the Gordon Riots, would leave gaping

blanks in any gallery of eighteenth-century scenes and characters. He is less courageous than Hogarth, more realistic than Lawrence. Though he does not see very far into things, he sees with astonishing clearness all that lies on the surface. And he delights in drawing what he sees, and in keeping the outlines precise and the colours true. Strange that this egotist should have failed to leave a full-length portrait of himself! He shows us only a cryptic and rather fascinating profile.

For all his shrugging cynicism, Walpole was, and remained to the last, an inveterate dreamer of dreams. "I hold visions to be wisdom," he wrote, in 1779, "and would deny them only to ambition, which exists only by the destruction of the visions of everybody else." His own visions were fantastic enough, and his reach was never—as your true visionary's should always be—much greater than his grasp. And, unfortunately, what he *did* grasp was not always worth holding. It is, perhaps, "a sort of wild justice" that posthumous criticism should have dealt, on the whole, so severely with one who was himself so indifferent a critic. The man who desecrated sublimity in Mason's *Elfrida* and perfection in Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, to whom poor Goldsmith was "an idiot with now and then a fit of parts", and Boswell, the "quintessence of busybodies", whose fastidiousness was affronted by Johnson's "blind Toryism and known brutality", who found *Tristram Shandy* "a very insipid and tedious performance", and wrote of *She Stoops to Conquer* "the whole piece is low humour and no humour is in it", was ill-fitted to pass that most testing of all judgments—judgment upon one's

contemporaries Nor was he much happier in his views of the august defunct, he to whom "Dante was but a Methodist parson in Bedlam, and Spenser, John Bunyan in rhyme"

It would indeed go hard with Walpole were his own literary quality gauged either by his verse or his other-than-epistolary prose Elsewhere than in his letters, anything that he did well was done as well by scores of his fellows, and better by dozens of them It is in that field—and it is no narrow one—that he stands inimitable, incomparable, alone These epithets are not excessive Thackeray's pastiche in *The Virginians*, deft and ingenious though it be, would deceive no reader familiar with the *corpus* of Walpole's letters as we have it to-day And to compare "Horry" with that other delightful letter-writer of his age, Cowper, would be just to neither of them While Walpole at his best was often a little eccentric, Cowper at his best was always sweetly sane, Walpole's intelligence flickers with reflected sparks, Cowper's shines quietly from within It may be that Cowper is more typically English The industrious M Yvon has assembled a vast array of gallicisms culled from Walpole's writings, and yet with what grace, lucidity, and charm could Walpole write the language that he thus tricked out with borrowed turns of phrase¹

Whether *les diables de l'oubli* should, or should not, be left in undisturbed possession of *le reste de son œuvre* Walpole's most sincerely admiring critic might hesitate to say In the mass there is much that is distressingly mediocre, and though mediocrity is not among the defects of *The Mysterious Mother*, that tragedy has others of a more formidable kind Certain

of his essays and satires seem to merit a better fate than perpetual oblivion. He is often malicious, but seldom malignant, and the salt of malice may preserve what the acid of malignancy can only corrode. For this reason, if for no other, the suggestion that he might conceivably have written the *Letters of Junius* answers itself in the negative. Such illusions as he had about the value of his "trifling writings" did not last his life-time. He knew what his one golden talent was, and he did not suffer it to darken underground.

In a single lyric form he shows a gift—and that a gracious one—to which few, if any, of the Augustans after Pindar could lay claim. His child-songs and his fairy-verses do not resemble the *Songs of Innocence*. He was, perhaps, too sane and too sophisticated to sing in accents at once so unearthly and so sweet. But the best of his lyrics in this kind are exquisite little things, like daisies from the meadow at "Strawberry", with a touch of moonlit dew upon them still.

Horace Walpole—he never liked his title of Orford, and we may release him from it here—ought assuredly to have died at Strawberry Hill. But in the early weeks of 1797 the rapid failure of his forces so alarmed his friends that they persuaded him to move from Twickenham to his town house, 11 Berkeley Square. It must have been with a sharp sense of pain that he turned and looked at his "baby-house",—his "poor plaything"—for what he knew would be the last time. On January 15 he dictated to Kirgate, for the Countess of Upper Ossory, the last—and not the least charming—of his letters. Only the signature and the line above it were written—laboriously—with his own hand. Lady Ossory had apparently praised his former

epistles, and confessed to having shared them with her friends. In his old half-whimsical, half-wistful vein, he remonstrates with her:

Oh, my good Madam, dispense with me from such a task, and think how it must add to it to apprehend such letters being shown. Pray send me no more such laurels, which I desire no more than their leaves when decked with a scrap of tinsel and stuck on twelfth-cakes that lie on the shop-boards of pastry-cooks at Christmas.

I shall be quite content with a sprig of rosemary thrown after me when the paison of the parish commits my dust to dust. Till then, Madam, pray accept the resignation of your

Ancient Servant,

O

This was the last flicker of his indomitable gaiety and courage, his most precious heritage from the mother he had loved so well, and by whose side he was laid at Houghton before the trees at Twickenham put forth their leaves again. Only at the very end was his intellect a little obscured. On February 27, 1797, Mr Joseph Farington, R A, calling at Berkeley Square to enquire after Lord Orford, was informed by "the sulky Swiss" that his lordship was dying. Three days later, very peacefully, the end came.

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